

# Zabelle

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# *Rocky Mountain Empire*



# ROCKY MOUNTAIN EMPIRE

*Revealing glimpses of the West in transition from  
old to new, from the pages of the Rocky Mountain  
Empire Magazine of The Denver Post*

*Edited by*

ELVON L. HOWE

*With a foreword by Palmer Hoyt*



DOUBLEDAY & COMPANY, INC.  
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## *Foreword*

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THE STORIES you will read in this volume go at a high lope from the hilarious to the poignant, from the exciting to the quietly dramatic. They are tersely told, timely as today's newspaper, and always, I think, both entertaining and revelatory of a young, important segment of America. But there is also a sober underlying significance to this book which I am impelled to point out by a glance at the past and the future.

The westward course of empire was milestoned indelibly across the face of the "Great American Desert" a century ago. But the human tide that rolled on tarred wooden axles over the Santa Fe and Overland trails was at first not an enveloping but a passing flood. It piled up against the white-bearded Rockies only long enough to penetrate, then rough-locked its way down and through and rolled on to salt water.

Gold was the lure—California gold and the incredibly fertile croplands waiting at the far end of the Oregon Trail. To the men in those canvas-hooded wagons that thousand miles of grassy plains, buffalo, Indians, granite-hard slopes, and blaz-

ing desert was nothing more than a grueling test of courage and endurance that was the purchase price of the promised land beyond.

Eventually many came back. John Gregory, for example, returning disappointed from a land of unfulfilled promises, stopped where the mountains meet the plains and found the gold that had eluded him in California. His lode sprouted Central City, now the site of a famous summer-long operatic and drama festival. It also aided the establishment of a supply depot at the edge of the plains which became the city of Denver.

Thus the development of the huge expanse just west of the nation's middle and equal to almost one third its total area became the last chapter in the epic of American pioneering. This development was a gradual process. In 1870, when Illinois had already 2,500,000 residents and distant California fully 500,000, lofty Colorado could claim only a sparse 40,000.

But more gold rushes came, and lusty ones. Sportsmen from the East and across the seas came to hunt the abundant game and returned with stories no one would believe. Pushed along by steel-bodied, steel-willed cowboys, great rivers of long-horned cattle streamed forth from Texas to harvest tall, rich grass left uneaten by the disappearing buffalo. Railroads came, and farmers and barbed-wire fences. A great photographer, William H. Jackson, trekked west from Omaha into the legendary wonderland called "Colter's Hell" to make wet-plate exposures that popped open the eyes of Congress and led to the establishment of the nation's first national park—the Yellowstone.

The slow discovery of the Great American Desert, which men were once quite happy to survive and then ignore, continued over decades. Boom towns crumbled and trading posts blossomed into gleaming, modern, dynamic cities. Unique

among them in both its geography and its development was Denver, a most improbable metropolis and the *only* one within a radius of well over five hundred miles.

Denver, to a degree approached by few other major population centers in America, was a self-made, bootstrap city. There was, to be sure, a show of yellow in the sands of the trickle called Cherry Creek where it joins the South Platte under the sunset shadow of 14,260-foot Mount Evans, but scarcely enough to justify a good-sized hamlet. As the main wagon trails had been deflected far to the north and the south by the forbidding mountain wall, so were the railroads.

But Denver's vigorous early-day citizens went out and helped build a 106-mile branch to the Union Pacific at Cheyenne, and when the gasoline age came around they supported the building of no less than 135 truck lines that now serve the city. The city grew to a full half million souls, still riding high on its terrific geography and serving as the focus for the economy of all, or major portions, of no less than eleven states.

As Denver grew, so grew the new West. It was still a land of violent landscape and contrasts, a land where the spectacular was ordinary. But it was a land apart, still regarded by many longer-rooted citizens elsewhere as quite definitely on the woolly side, a place where cowboys probably still shot up saloons with diligent regularity.

Such a bulk of "Western literature" grew up around this American legend that it became in fact a wall behind which the true modern West was developing in a manner and to a degree scarcely comprehended in older parts of the nation.

Came a second World War, and with it literally hundreds of thousands of young servicemen who had never seen this part of the world before. They liked it, extravagantly. They liked its climate, its youthfulness, its hospitality, and its odor of old-fashioned American opportunity. After the war many

thousands of them packed up their families and came back for the simple reason that this was where they wanted to live. Prosperity arrived, too, in such measure that the region assumed an economic stature never before even dreamed of. Wheat, cattle, oil, and minerals became touchstones to some of the mightiest fortunes of American history. The Great American Desert suddenly was being discussed under a strange new name—the “land of the big rich.”

Denver, like smaller cities up and down the Big Divide, began to simmer with expansive forces formerly unknown to a quiet, smokeless health haven which had come to glory in its pleasant remoteness, its sparkling climate, and its aloofness from the municipal scrambling by which other cities normally build themselves.

Without realizing it and certainly without trying very hard, Denver had become a metropolis unique in its sphere of influence and what it represented. Reluctantly or otherwise, the folks of the plains and mountains began to comprehend that their place in the national scene was irrevocably expanding and changing. Individualistic, proud, and still as close to a hardy pioneering heritage as to their own grandparents, they were frequently misunderstood by outsiders. Often they were criticized by distant observers who tried and failed to fit them into patterns that apply well enough to other sections of the nation. They fitted no pattern but their own. Often in return they resented the new kind of attention they were getting and were accused of a chip-on-the-shoulder attitude. It was time to be bridging this gap; it was time to build understanding of this region which holds so much of what America really means—to let its people know about themselves and let the rest of the world know about them too.

Within a week after I assumed my duties as the new pub-



lisher of the *Denver Post* in February 1946 we selected a name for this territory of mountain and plain. Terming it the Rocky Mountain Empire was no flamboyant publicity stratagem, but merely the application of a name to an already accomplished fact. This is an empire in fact, united in history, character, climate, community interest, and ambition. And the *Denver Post* would perforce be its voice—there is no other metropolitan newspaper which even attempts to serve the entire region.

We promptly instituted an editorial page for the vigorous interchange of opinion, and within five months a new and important editorial instrument had made its appearance—the *Post's* rotogravure *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine. Geographically and editorially it was an ambitious undertaking. Certainly no newspaper supplement had ever before set itself to cover and to represent a thousand-mile circle. But all geography is spectacular here.

So were the results.

With a little digging by editors who were reporters and breakneck travelers more than desk men, a thrilling collection of stories past and present, redolent with high American flavor, came to light. Early and generous recognition by the *Reader's Digest* lent prestige to the infant magazine and helped bring many notable writers into its pages. Not a dozen but many times, the world-wide information outlets of the U. S. State Department has used the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine's stories and pictures to portray to all continents the true America. And most important of all, the home folks liked it, studied it, and wondered at the new facts they were learning about themselves.

To some, the fact that the Rocky Mountain Empire came last in the nation's development may carry with it the stigma of least desirability. Increasingly to others, however, it signifies

a culmination. Here in this empire may well exist America's happiest blending of old with new, of sturdy tradition with modern convenience, of outdoor vigor with atomic-age cosmopolitanism. Particularly is this true of the people you will read about in this book.

Here are the stories of a quite typical modern ranch woman who may be bucking snow on horseback this week and attending a formal dinner in Miami the next, and of a dynamic New Mexico schoolmaster who led his town and his county out of black disaster into an achievement the world can respect. Here, too, is the story of one of the old West's most dramatic train bandits in the yellowback-novel tradition, who is now peacefully operating a Wyoming tourist court. There are tales of the tiny narrow-gauge locomotive which should have hit the scrap heap in 1900 but lasted long enough to haul material for the atom bomb; the strange legend of the last of the Texas longhorns; a trip with today's diesel giants hauling freight over the Continental Divide where wolves chase the trucks at an altitude of twelve thousand feet. There are many more, chosen from the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine during the first three and a half years of its publication.

To Elvon L. Howe, the *Post's* Sunday editor and main drive wheel of the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine since its inception, and to his assistant, Bill Hosokawa, goes credit for writing a number of the stories presented, and for repeated and careful editing of the rest. To William Kostka, former New York editor and now a successful Denver public relations counsel, our thanks for carefully studying the magazine and bringing an outsider's viewpoint into the selection of stories for the book. H. Ray Baker, long a leading Denver commercial artist who was recently added to the magazine staff, is responsible for the excellent illustrations and the jacket design. And

to the editors of Doubleday & Company we acknowledge a debt for having suggested the volume in the first place. Until then we had been too busy to think of such a thing.

PALMER HOYT

*February 1950*



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# *Rocky Mountain Empire*







## *Joe Bauldauff's Bear*

BY FRED GIPSON

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**H**ARVEY DICKERSON, who's lived up here in the mountains near Buford, Colorado, for probably too long, tells about a bear-taming friend of his named Joe Bauldauff.

At the time Dickerson speaks of, Joe was high-grading ore from an abandoned gold mine up on Miller Creek, some eighteen miles out of Meeker.

As the mine shaft was up a steep mountainside and he didn't own a mule, Joe had to go to considerable trouble sacking the ore and packing it on his back down to his cabin. But he had a friend who'd come by every now and then to haul the ore to town for him in a wagon.

Joe had been on a meat hunt and shot a black she-bear, then discovered that she had a cub. Joe had taken the cub to raise, feeding it mostly on sweet potatoes, of which Joe was mighty fond himself.

As the bear grew bigger he got so he didn't have to have his potatoes baked. Joe kept the potatoes bedded in a dugout in the side of the mountain, where they wouldn't freeze; and he

had to be careful about keeping the door latched or the cub would break in and eat the potatoes raw.

But the cub was mighty good company for Joe and would follow him up to the mine shaft and back every day.

One evening when Joe's bones were still aching from packing down a big shoulder-load of ore, he noticed how big and strong his cub was getting to be. And that's when a notion struck him. Why not make that fat rascal earn his sweet potatoes?

It seemed like a good idea, so Joe spent the next day building a sled that would hold ore and a set of bear harness cut out of a bull elk's hide.

The bear didn't think so much of Joe's idea, though. When Joe hooked him to the sled he stood and whimpered and whined mighty pitiful. When Joe kept urging, the bear lost his temper and tried to bite the harness in two, and Joe had to twitch him across the nose a time or two to make him stop.

Finally, with a lot of coaxing and petting, Joe got the bear to drag the sled up to the mine and back down again with a load of ore.

Joe was sure proud of his bear and made a big fuss over him, which the bear enjoyed almost as much as the extra big bait of potatoes that Joe fed him for supper.

After that it was easy. In no time the bear was used to his job, and before long acted like he enjoyed the work.

One morning about the time his bear got full grown Joe ate his breakfast and called to his bear—but no bear came. Joe searched all around, whistling and calling, until he finally located his bear sleeping in a grove of aspen.

"You lazy bear!" Joe scolded. "You wake up and come work!" And he kicked the bear's fat rump to help him come awake.

It got results, all right. The bear came to his feet with a roar, wheeled to face Joe, baring his teeth.

Joe was surprised. His bear never had been unruly. "Whatsa matter, you bear?" he exclaimed impatiently. "Why you make fight at Joe Bauldauff? You hush that now, and let's get to work!"

The bear didn't hush, but he did rise to his hind feet and come at Joe, slapping at him with both forepaws.

And that's when Joe lost his temper. "You fool bear!" he shouted angrily, reaching down to grab up a short length of solid spruce. "You eat Joe Bauldauff's potatoes. You sleep under Joe Bauldauff's warm bed. You get big fat and now you think you no have to work. Well, Joe Bauldauff will show you a thing!"

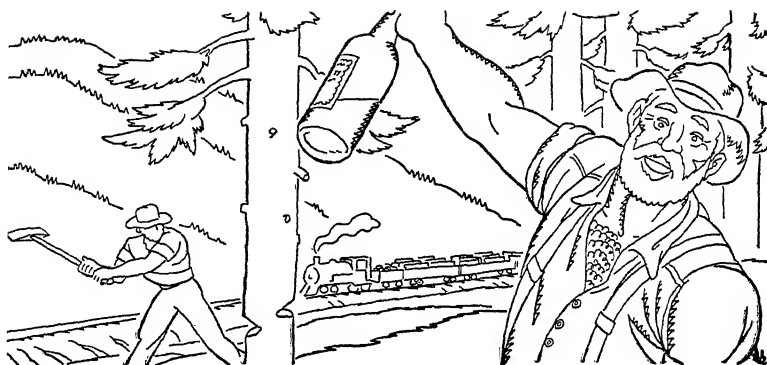
And Joe proceeded to show him. He waded right into that mad bear, swinging his club. He worked the creature over from nose to tail. He drove him to the house and made him stand while the harness was put on him.

The bear tried to fight again when Joe started to drive him up the mountain hooked to the sled. But he didn't have a chance. Joe was mad as a wet hen at the lack of appreciation his bear showed. He swarmed all over the animal and, with kicks and blows, drove him up to the mine shaft, where he stacked a double load of ore on the sled.

There wasn't a nickel's worth of gold in the whole load, but that wasn't the point. Joe aimed to show his bear who was boss.

Which he did. The bear growled part of the way down and cried like a baby the rest of the way when Joe laid on the club some more. But he finally dragged that heavy load of ore down to Joe's cabin, just like Joe told him to.

And that's when Joe's pet bear came romping out of the sweet-potato dugout, just tickled silly to see Joe again!



## *The Tie Hacks Were Terrific*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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A six-foot, genial Japanese-American from Seattle, Bill Hosokawa came to the *Denver Post* staff via the University of Washington, English-language newspapers in Singapore and Shanghai, and the Des Moines, Iowa, *Register-Tribune*. As a key member of the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine since 1947, he has made a firm place for himself as both an editor and a writer. Sent out to record for the first time ever a lusty chapter in the West's quite recent past, he pulled into Dubois, Wyoming, on the day of a big tie-hack celebration and made small reportorial progress. Later he cornered a tight-lipped Norseman named Martin Olson, won his friendship, and drew from him gradually these salty tales of a rough, tough half century during which mighty men hand-hewed railroad ties from Wyoming's pine forests.

ONE DAY shortly after the turn of the century some three hundred and fifty lumberjacks—bearded, unwashed, and itching for a fight—descended on Encampment, Wyoming.

The good citizens, to whom this annual invasion was as welcome as a smallpox outbreak, waited for the worst.

When no one was foolhardy enough to challenge their entry, the lumberjacks thrust their peaveys into the board sidewalks, scattered for the saloons with the instinct of homing pigeons,

kicked in the doors with calked boots, and demanded to be served. Then, properly refreshed and unable to coax the townspeople into battle, they proceeded to pummel each other unconscious in a series of unrelated but joyous brawls.

A stranger would have been shocked at the sight of several score apparently lifeless corpses strewn grotesquely in the muddy streets. But somehow the arrival of daylight and life-giving sunshine revived them.

After a snort or three to get the circulation going, they straggled back to the hills, boasting mightily of their prowess, while the townspeople tallied the damage and swept up the wreckage. That was one of the philosophically accepted hazards of life in the proximity of Wyoming lumberjacks.

On another such occasion the law got the better of two celebrating hacks who were escorted to the local poky. This was reason enough for sixteen of their colleagues to pick up a log—later estimated to weigh a good ton and a half—and batter in the jailhouse wall. Mission completed, the whole gang trooped out of town highly pleased with the evening's sport.

One other time Jim Dixon, the original one-man gang, was engaged with half the male citizens of Saratoga in a now memorable fracas. Dixon weighed somewhat in excess of two hundred and forty pounds and was nicknamed Boxcar for his structural resemblance thereto.

The issue was still in doubt when George Bell, another lumberjack of Boxcar Jim's proportions, appeared on the scene and plunged in with a happy roar. Back to back the two giants stood in the middle of the street, grinning through bloody lips and thundering encouragement to each other as they flailed the citizenry with hamlike fists.

After a convincing demonstration of the way two typical tree-cutting men spend a pleasant evening in town, they were disappointed when the last of the opposition was either leveled

or chased to cover. Boxcar Jim and Bell solemnly shook hands and repaired to the nearest saloon to toast their alliance and try to drink each other under the table.

These were the tie hacks—woodsmen with sinews of spring steel, who for a half century hacked out by hand the millions of crossties used by the West's railroads, then floated them down white-water streams in spectacular drives. They brought to the Wyoming forests the wild abandon of their Viking forebears, and their prowess with broadax and bottle fathered legends that well might have been perpetuated in Beowulfian saga.

Unfortunately there were no singers of epics to record their virile history. The hacks spun their tales around campfires, but no one thought to record them—perhaps because it never occurred to any literate person that these men were making history.

In the woods they were magnificent. Towering, powerful, they made a stirring picture in the vastness of the forests whose silence was broken only by the high snoring of two-man cross-cut saws, the crunch of axes biting crisply into living wood, the crash of a tree or an occasional oath ripped off with nonchalant fervor.

They were lusty men who loved the pungent woods and nurtured a fierce pride in their skill. It was their creed to work as hard as their rocklike muscles could drive them, and when it was time to play they brooked no inhibitions.

At a tender age the tie hacks learned to cultivate the three B's—booze, bawds, and brawls. They grew into men blessed with lead-lined stomachs and cursed by an inextinguishable thirst for alcohol in its viler forms. They mauled strangers and each other for the sheer love of mayhem. At trail's end they were not remorseful.

And when at last time, the motor truck, and the power saw

replaced the hacks, their employers erected a monument to their accomplishments. They were that kind of men.

The monument, fourteen feet high and carved from a three-and-a-half-ton block of limestone, stands on a wind-swept little knoll just off Highway 287, nineteen miles northwest of Dubois, Wyoming. In bas-relief is the figure of a tie hack with broadax and saw. Behind him stand a skidder with a team pulling a log and a riverman with a pike pole.

At the base is a bronze plaque which reads: "Erected to perpetuate the memory of the hardy woods and rivermen who made and delivered the crossties for the building and maintenance of the Chicago & Northwestern railway in this western country. Wyoming Tie & Timber Company. 1946."

There were a handful of old-time tie hacks—the last gnarled specimens of their breed—present when the monument was dedicated late in the summer of 1948. There were speeches, a prayer, and an open-air dinner for nearly a thousand guests. The hacks were a bit embarrassed by all the fuss, but it was easy to see that beneath their sheepish grins they were proud enough to bust.

The history of the Wyoming tie hacks falls naturally into two eras, with 1919 as a rough division date. Before then, operations extended from Laramie to Green River, and nearly every stream crossed by the Union Pacific was a base for logging.

After that time tie hacking began to be concentrated largely in the Keystone and Wind River country. And it was in 1919 that Ricker Van Metre entered the picture and brought a semblance of order and big-business efficiency to a large segment of the industry without detracting from its vim, vigor, and good-humored vulgarity.

Van Metre, with a Midwest lumbering background, was called in by the original promoters when the Wyoming Tie &

Timber Company hung on the lip of bankruptcy. He saw vast forests, admirably suited for making crossties, on the slopes of the Wind River Range. And he found no reason why new capital couldn't drag the firm back to solvency.

Perhaps the largest single factor in his decision was a stocky, taciturn woods boss named Martin Olson, then approaching forty. Olson spoke with the thick accents of his native Norway and had a way about him that attracted the loyalty if not the affection of the rough woods characters.

Recently Van Metre had occasion to recall his first meeting with Olson. "I saw in Martin," he said, "a roughhewn, steely-eyed man of the woods to whom nothing was impossible. He had no hesitation about tangling with a logger twice his size if he felt the man needed a whipping. He had a way of getting the best out of an ornery crew—they would have carried the season's cut out on their backs, with Martin in the lead, if it had been necessary."

The partnership between Olson and Van Metre that began in 1919 is memorable for its harmony in an industry known for the lack of it. Their business ties finally were severed in 1947 when Van Metre sold out to the J. N. Fisher Tie & Timber Company, and Olson stayed on as advisory vice-president.

Olson's life story, which spans the two eras of Wyoming lumbering, is an epic in itself. Mellow now that he is crowding seventy, but no less alert, he relates fascinating tales of the earlier days when he relaxes by the fireplace of his trim, white Dubois home with old cronies and a bottle or two of aquavit, that high-octane Swedish liqueur.

"A woods boss," he says with just a touch of sadness, "had to be able to work in any weather, under the worst kind of hardships. He had to be tough enough to wipe up the brush with any damfool hack that got out of line—maybe even knock



two or three of 'em on the seat of their pants to show who was boss. I'm past that age."

But for a half century he worked with, bossed, cajoled, humored, mothered, drove, and thrashed some of the most irascible characters to spring from the human race.

Olson's upbringing fitted him well for a career in the woods. His father was a Namsos timber contractor. When in 1897 he left home at the age of seventeen to join an uncle in frontier Wyoming, he was already a veteran of the Norwegian woods and river drives, and had made several voyages as a deck hand on lumber schooners plying between Namsos and London.

His first job in America was at a tie camp near his uncle's homestead.

He was exposed early to the harshness of a lumberjack's life. The men passed Wyoming's deep-snow winters in shacks with a hole in the roof for a chimney. No one shaved or got a haircut from the first freeze-up until spring thaw, and bathing was an equally unfamiliar luxury.

Drinking was one of the few outlets open to these lonely men. The lumberjacks were big drinkers but, strangely enough, not "good" drinkers. Apparently because of the long parched periods between the wet ones, three or four drinks were enough to get an average lumberjack high.

But there were notable exceptions. One Rheinholdt Anderson, who understandably has been with his ancestors for many years, won a measure of fame as the most prodigious tippler of them all. It was not unusual, Olson declares, for Anderson to consume three and four quarts of liquor in a single night, and on one well-remembered occasion poured a quart of undiluted whisky down his throat in less than four minutes. And kept it down.

There probably was some basis to the belief that alcohol had replaced most of Anderson's body fluids and needed frequent

replenishing. In later years when Anderson felt a powerful thirst developing he would go to town, buy several cases of whisky, and go to bed with the bottles stacked within easy reach. And there he would stay until every last bottle was drained.

Another lumberjack known as Drunken Andy—and he came by his name honestly—lacked Rheinholdt Anderson's precautionary foresight and lived to rue the day. That was the night he went to town with a roll of sixteen hundred dollars burning his pocket. By daylight, Drunken Andy had only a colossal headache to show for his money, and a more prudent colleague paid for Andy's breakfast. Andy was in his sixties at the time.

In his sober periods Drunken Andy was a superb lumberjack and is remembered as perhaps Wyoming's champion tie-maker of all time. By swinging his broadax with the tireless precision of an automaton, he could turn out as many as eighty ties a day—nearly double the average output—and gross all of eight dollars for the effort.

But it is likely that the sixteen-hundred-dollar incident caused Drunken Andy no greater sorrow than the time he had to do away with his most treasured possession, a clock.

This clock for some reason suddenly acquired a most annoying habit. "Drunken Andy," it said, "Drunken Andy, Drunken Andy, Drunken Andy," repeating those words with metronomic regularity.

Puzzled, Drunken Andy took the clock out of his cabin and placed it atop a stump. But now it began to say: "Drunken Andy, you're a sonofabitch; Drunken Andy, you're a sonofabitch."

To Drunken Andy this was the voice of his conscience and not to be endured. More in sorrow than anger, he silenced it by burning his prized clock in the cabin stove.

Olson likes to tell, too, about the curious mass drinking bout

that turned out tragically. A crew of half a hundred tie hacks had trooped into the village of Elk Mountain in the Medicine Bow forest for a dance on a Saturday night.

Most of them were still around on Monday, and by Tuesday the drinking began in earnest. During a lull when the boys were getting a breath of air, along came a man with a team of horses which he tied in front of the saloon.

Some ribald hack, identity now forgotten, then offered to bet that the bay horse would be the first to, shall we say, create a public nuisance. He was taken up quickly by backers of the black horse, and in a few moments several hundred dollars had been wagered.

Delegating one Ecklund, the eldest and least able-bodied of the group, to stand watch, the men returned to the saloon for more refreshments.

Ecklund drove the horses into a nearby barn and sat down to await developments.

In due time one of the animals performed in the manner of all horses since time immemorial. Ecklund rushed off to report. With jubilant whoops the men ran out to the barn to witness the evidence.

But by the time they arrived the second horse had likewise performed and now there was only the word of one witness to establish the chronology. That was not enough. Typically the hacks attempted to resolve the question with fists.

Poor old Ecklund was caught between the factions and pummeled painfully before the hacks tired of the sport and retired to the saloon to salve contusions and bruised feelings with more alcohol.

Before dawn next morning a number of the men who had to return to camp went to the stable for their horses. They found Ecklund hanging by his neck from a beam, cold dead, with an overturned milk box near by to explain how he had killed himself.

This, of course, was reason for a round of remorseful drinking, and in due time a grave was dug, a coffin constructed, and Ecklund buried with ceremony.

Some months later a river crew sighted an odd-shaped box on a sand bar where camp had been pitched. They found the box a convenient seat for supper and a made-to-order table for the evening's poker game.

Next morning the cook, in search of kindling, stooped to hack at the box and came up with his hair standing on end. Within were the remains of the unfortunate Ecklund, apparently exhumed by a spring flood.

Ecklund was quickly placed underground again, but there is no record that the whole grim incident had any good or lasting effect on the drinking habits of his former associates.

Martin Olson moved through the years, from one camp and job to the next. After a period as tie hack Olson became a teamster, hauling ties on sleighs from the woods to the creek banks. Eventually he became drive boss, known personally or by reputation to virtually every hack in Wyoming.

In the spring of 1916 Olson went to the Wind River country to take charge of the drive for Wyoming Tie & Timber. Difficult times were approaching. By 1917, with the United States at war, men were scarce, production costs soared. But the tie contract with the railroad was at a fixed price with no provision for adjustments. By 1919 the company was ready to call it quits.

Actually the industry was almost over the hump, but didn't know it at the time Ricker Van Metre arrived. The railroads were emerging badly undermaintained after wartime federal control and the government was required to restore the properties. Thus there was a tremendous demand for crossties and plenty of the wherewithal to pay for materials. Van Metre found little difficulty in persuading bankers to

put up the capital needed to set Wyoming T. & T. back on its feet.

Olson went to work in 1920 with a crew of twenty men who turned out 100,000 ties. Each year the crew increased, the ranks reinforced by young, woods-wise immigrants from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and a lesser number from Germany, Austria, and northern Italy.

By 1926 the tie output was up to 670,000 and stayed near that figure until the outbreak of World War II. All told, Wyoming T. & T. harvested 400,000,000 board feet of timber in the form of 10,000,000 crossties, almost all of them hand-hewed. The peak year was 1927, when 700,000 ties were driven down the Wind River to the yards at Riverton.

Here the ties were sorted, seasoned, treated with preservative, and stacked for the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. These operations were supervised by Bill McLaughlin, who arrived in Riverton in 1913.

As sawmills and truck roads invaded other Wyoming forest areas, the Wind River country became the last stronghold of the old-time hacks. Some of the men who had worked with Olson at the turn of the century went along with him to contribute their store of woods lore and practical jokes to the sum total of Dubois camp life.

There was, for one, Soapy Dale, whom Olson had first met in 1898. In those days Soapy used to get what the boys called "the snakes" once or twice a week, and a doctor warned him that he had only six months to live if he didn't keep away from the bottle. Apparently Soapy drowned the snakes in alcohol, for he continued to enjoy both his liquor and his good health.

Soapy was unusual in that he had book learning. He was also a skillful raconteur and enjoyed his reputation as yarn spinner. One night, however, Soapy met his match in a garru-

lous visitor named Jack Gaebert, who insisted on keeping the floor in a campfire bull session.

Soapy fumed unhappily for a while, then solved the problem in his own way. He walked off a hundred yards, built his own campfire, and then invited his friends to come and listen to a real storyteller.

Once, with a party of half a dozen men starting on a week's hunting trip, Soapy was detailed to bring the food. At dinner-time Soapy unpacked the expedition's entire grub supply, which consisted of one loaf of bread, a small box of crackers, a piece of cheese, and a can of coffee. That was enough sustenance for everyone, Soapy insisted, provided the others had brought along a reasonable supply of whisky.

Soapy was last heard from in 1948. Fiercely refusing to take any man's charity, he had signed as a sheepherder in the lonely sage country somewhere near Worland, Wyoming. He was eighty-seven years old.

Perhaps the strongest man in Wyoming lumbering history was John Engstrom, a teamster with keg-sized limbs and the torso of an oak tree. For sheer power he is believed to have had the edge over both Boxcar Jim Dixon and his sidekick, George Bell.

Engstrom was less than six feet tall and nearly that wide. He was so powerful that less mightily endowed tie hacks wondered why Engstrom bothered to use horses to snake logs out of the brush.

Engstrom and his playmates were the kind who could toss anvils around like medicine balls. Just for the sport of it they wrenched horseshoes apart, punched holes in crates with bare fists, and drove spikes—held with the head in their palms—through two-inch planks.

In a society where physical strength was a religion, fights to determine a crew's top man were not uncommon. Sometimes

these were regulation boxing matches with gloves and a ring; more often they were primitive, rough-and-tumble, bare-knuckle battles in which knees and calked boots were legitimate weapons and which ended only when one of the contestants no longer could get up off the ground.

The victor won nothing except the right to be known as the best man of the crew. He reigned until a better man came along.

One of the best-remembered contests took place between a wiry young Swede named Pete Smorlund and a powerful Negro, Bill Brown. It took more than a week to arrive at a decision.

There were two or three bouts a day, and each was halted only when one of the men was stretched senseless. They'd fight after supper and be at it again before breakfast in an amazing demonstration of courage, endurance, and bull-headedness.

Smorlund was finally declared victor when he swayed—worn, battered, and bleeding—over Brown's inert form.

One morning two decades later, the hacks found Brown barefooted in the snow and sparring desperately with a pine tree. He was under the impression the tree was about to do him harm. He died soon afterward.

Bill Brown was one of three brothers who gave the lie to the saying that only Nordics make good woodsmen. His older brother Louis first showed up in Wyoming about 1898 and remained a hack until 1928, when he moved to Chicago and bought a rooming house.

Louie and Bill Brown worked among Scandinavians so long that both lost their drawls and learned to speak Swedish like natives. In later years they were pointed out to boys fresh from the old country as "sunburned Swedes," tanned beyond redemption from many Wyoming summers.

After a winter of confinement and the unrelieved drudgery of hacking out square ties from round logs, the annual drives were the high point of the year. The ties were trucked or sledged all through the winter and spring to the banks of the Wind River above Dubois and stacked in tiers twenty high, three deep, and more than a quarter mile long.

It was time to start the drive when the Wind's snow-fed waters dropped, usually sometime in July. The first of the ties would be shoved into the stream to start the wild, hazard-filled hundred-and-fifty-mile water ride to the yards at River-ton, and the drive would be on.

A crew of half a hundred men directed by Olson herded the ties like so many rambunctious sheep. The hacks raced down the banks, scrambled over boulders, waded armpit-deep, sometimes rode two of the eight-foot-long ties ski-fashion down white water. Peaveys and pike poles were their tools and they wore calked boots punched full of holes to let the water out as fast as it poured in.

A cloudburst could spread the river out over the entire valley floor within minutes, with the receding waters leaving ties stranded a quarter mile from the channel. It was tedious, backbreaking work to haul them back.

There were spectacular jams that piled the river from bank to bank with a tangle of lumber. That was when artists with the peavey like Brady Kjelmo were at their best. With uncanny skill he would locate the key tie and snake it loose with a heave of the peavey. That failing, he would place a charge of dynamite under the culprit and blast the jam free with a minimum of breakage.

In the thirty-one years of the drives on the Wind River there was only one drowning, a remarkable safety record in view of the hazards. More than once the men formed human chains to rescue a buddy floundering in a treacherous eddy.



From the cliffs hemming in the Wind River the drive was a spectacular and beautiful sight. The ties looked for all the world like shoestring potatoes tumbling, rolling, careening in the frothing, boiling rapids, with antlike men scrambling among them.

The drives lasted an average of thirty days. Once the crew finished the job in a record-shattering fourteen and a half days. Another year, when luck and the elements frowned, it took all of sixty-eight nerve-racking days and nights to get the last of the ties into the Riverton boom.

The final drive was held in 1947, when 150,000 ties were floated down the river. The tireless gasoline engine and portable sawmill gradually replaced the broadax, until by 1946 all the ties were being sawed. Mechanization also was responsible for abandonment of the drives. Now the ties ride down to Riverton aboard efficient but unromantic trucks.

Rising labor costs had much to do with mechanizing the industry. At first the hacks were paid a dime for each tie. An expert working like a human buzz saw could trim a log in ten minutes. He had done a good day's work by the time he turned out fifty ties.

The rate of pay climbed gradually until, during the terrific wartime demand for crossties, hacks were getting fifty cents each for them.

The ends of the drives at Riverton were gala if uninhibited affairs. As the tie drivers neared, the gay girls flocked in; the city fathers reinforced the police force and awaited the invasion with stolid resignation. Since most of the hacks were determined to knock themselves pie-eyed as rapidly and thoroughly as possible when they reached civilization, Riverton's fears were well founded.

One Axel Strand, better known as Syrup, started on the drive annually for thirty-one years with the solemn intention

of remaining sober so that he could get a job in the yards. He never succeeded.

Crazy Charlie Anderson—no relation to the bottomless Rheinholdt—did better. With a mighty show of determination one year he demanded that his buddies leave him aboard the boom in the middle of the river. Separated from temptation by the cold, swift current, Crazy Charlie remained in splendid if dejected sobriety while performing the boom man's duties. But he never punished himself so severely again.

During the prohibition era bootleggers followed the progress of the drive as closely as stockbrokers watching the ticker tape, and timed their arrival in Riverton—laden with great quantities of potent beverages—with the coming of the parched hacks.

Wyoming T. & T. joined in the spirit of things by purchasing and dispensing much of the liquid cheer, and virtually everyone in the county was on hand for the free dinners that the company staged.

Sometimes the aftermath was memorable. After one celebration Crazy Charlie Anderson and John Holm drove their team back to camp, maneuvered into the bunkhouse, and somehow managed to pitch their tent on the plank floor—fulminating, no doubt, over the extreme difficulty of driving stakes into such hard ground. Then they unrolled their blankets and went to sleep.

The hack's performance at the dinner table was marked with the same enthusiasm he demonstrated in the woods or at the mahogany bar. Great kettles of mulligan stew and cords of Dutch-oven bread disappeared with astonishing speed.

Martin Olson figures it took a ton of provender to fuel each tie hack a year—an average of almost five and a half pounds of food daily. Meat was served at every meal.

Breakfast usually started with bacon or ham and eggs, plus

potatoes and flapjacks on the side, served with gallons of bitter coffee. Beef—fried, stewed, roasted—was the main course for the day's other two meals.

Each meal had to be on time, tasty and adequate in every way to keep the hacks satisfied. The cooks were key men in any crew.

Although molars are a necessary adjunct to hearty eating, dental care in the tie camps was conspicuous by its absence. Often the more intrepid hacks were pressed into service as extractionists and went to work armed with a pair of pliers and two slugs of whisky—one for the dentist and one for the patient.

Dental plates usually were acquired on a mail-order basis. Makeshift impressions were sent to dentists in Riverton or Denver, and in due time back would come the plates. If they fitted reasonably well it was a happy accident.

The hacks needed little encouragement to take or knock their china teeth out. The morning after one moist celebration the barn dog (stableboy) was sent about the vicinity to look for scattered plates. Presently he came back with thirty-six sets in various stages of ill-repair. After the plates were distributed, some hacks found their teeth fitting better than before the party.

Few of the tie hacks married. The Johnson Immigration Act of 1924 halted the flow of recruits from Europe. As the old hacks died there were none to replace them. Sentiment over the decline of the breed no doubt played as much a part as technological changes in Van Metre's decision to sell out.

Martin Olson puts it simply: "Maybe we should have educated a new generation of men for work in the woods. Anyway, we came to the end of an era. It was time to quit."



## *Navajo Purchase*

BY JAMES C. G. CONNIFF

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Jim Conniff, of New Jersey, long a successful free-lance contributor to the leading national magazines, came by to explore the mystic Monument Valley on the Utah-Arizona border. There, in a druid's dreamland of glittering desert distances broken only by perpetually astonishing neolithic rock columns and smooth-faced buttes a thousand feet high, he was initiated into the Navajo version of bustling commerce. Mr. Conniff's lively articles have appeared regularly in the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine for the past three years.

HARRY GOULDING's job for the last ten years might easily have reduced another storekeeper to laughing, sobbing, gibbering insanity inside of the first ten minutes. Harry thrives on it.

In addition to serving as guide and managing a tourist camp, he runs a trading post in Monument Valley, Utah, two hundred miles from the nearest railroad station. His customers are drawn from the fifty thousand Navajo Indians who live in the valley.

One summer, while Harry was talking with a white visitor, a Navajo wandered into the post. The white visitor stepped

away from the counter to let the Navajo make his purchases. After all, the Navajos have first claim on Harry Goulding's attention.

"*Yah-teh!*" grunted the Navajo. "Greetings!"

"*Yah-teh!*" murmured Harry.

"*Yah-teh!*" grunted the Navajo again.

"*Yah-teh!*" Harry replied very solemnly.

"*Yah-teh!*" grunted the Indian a third time.

"*Yah-teh!*" answered Harry, his expression unchanged.

The Navajo leaned across the counter. Formalities were now over. For three long minutes silence ticked away. The Indian said nothing. The storekeeper gazed dreamily out the window where Monument Valley danced in the blazing sun.

The white visitor, ignored by both, shifted uneasily in the background and began to get embarrassed. But he kept his mouth shut.

Finally the Indian sighed, pulled himself away from the counter, and sat down on a box. More minutes went by. Suddenly the Navajo sighed again, slowly got to his feet, and muttered: "Bottle of pop!"

Harry Goulding opened a warm bottle of pop and gave it to the Indian, who paid Harry a dime and drank the pop.

An hour went by. The white visitor was fascinated now. He jumped a bit when the Indian suddenly said, "Want five dollars!" He watched Navajo and trader go into the back part of the post and remove a turquoise-studded belt, heavily mounted with ornate silver, from among hundreds of pieces of jewelry suspended from the rafters.

There was a tag on the belt. It bore the Navajo's name, his mother's tribe's name, his English name, and his government serial number. It bore also the extent of his indebtedness to Harry Goulding.

Gravely Harry erased the previous figure, added the five

dollars to it, and re-entered it on the tag. They both returned to the front part of the trading post. Harry handed the Navajo five one-dollar bills. The Navajo, sighing deeply, sat down again.

For no apparent reason, his eyes looking off into the desert distances, the Navajo began a long and indirect story, full of "they say" and "it is heard" and "the tale goes round that." It ran on, singsong, for twenty minutes. Right in the middle of it he broke off, went up to the counter, pointed at something that cost three dollars, and paid for it.

He resumed his seat. The story was never completed. It was forgotten.

An hour later the Navajo rose, handed the trader a dollar without pointing at anything, and walked out of the post. Goulding went back to where the jewelry hung, reduced the figure on the belt by one dollar, and returned to his white visitor.

"That's the way they like to do business," Harry explained. "Why should I try to rush them? I'm not going anyplace."

Just then the Navajo reappeared in the doorway. He walked up to the counter, pulled a rug from under his coat, and flopped it down in front of Harry. Neither said anything. Then Harry laid a five-dollar bill on the rug.

The Indian looked at it and yawned. He sat down with a sigh. Harry added another dollar to the five. The Indian just looked at it. By seven o'clock that night, when Harry closed up the post, the Indian was still looking at it. He spent the night in a hut provided by Harry for customers unable to make up their minds.

Next morning he was back when the post opened. All morning he looked at the rug and the six dollars. At a quarter of twelve he picked up the money and pocketed it. That was the signal that the deal was closed. Harry put the rug under the

counter. Without another word the Navajo sighed and departed.

"That'd drive me crazy," the white visitor shrilled at Harry. "How can you put up with it?"

"Oh, that guy was in a hurry," grinned Harry Goulding. "You should come around sometime when one of them really has trouble making up his mind. After the third day of it I almost forget myself. Once I nearly asked a chief if there was something I could do for him. That would've been fatal!"



## *Them Reckless Lee Boys*

BY FRED GIPSON

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At this stage Fred Gipson has few equals as a tale spinner of the out-of-doors, more specifically in stories of hounds and the men who follow them. He heard tell of the Lee brothers while on assignment in Arizona as a member of the *Rocky Mountain Empire* staff, promptly forgot his other destinations, and took off on a hot scent. The result was this thigh-whacking yarn. After his first novel, *Hound-Dog Man* (Harper & Brothers, 1949, \$2.50), became a best seller Mr. Gipson returned to his home farm at Mason, Texas.

FOR RECKLESS living, "them Lee boys," of Tucson and Paradise, Arizona, are hard to beat. Sometimes it looks like they just don't give a darn. Any one of the six—Ernest, Bill, Vince, Barney, Clell, or Dale—would just as soon rope and hog-tie a mountain lion as eat bear steak and wild honey.

And they're all right handy around a table, too. All, that is, except Dale. Dale's six foot six, weighs a hundred and twenty-four pounds, and claims he has to watch his waistline mighty close!

Them Lee boys (company name Lee Brothers) are guides for Eastern dudes who'd like to be big-game hunters. They



are also hound-dog men. They own some seventy-five flopped blue and red-ticked hounds that can pick up a week-old scent of bear, lion, wolf, or lynx cat and hang the trail until they've put something up a tree.

The Lee brothers have chased and caught the big cats all over the Rocky Mountain country, in Mexico, Canada, and South America. Over a thousand of them in twenty years. And they've still got the idea that once they've jumped a cat they ought to catch it.

Once Clell and Dale took a Canadian dude on a jaguar hunt down in the forks of the Rio Bavispe and Rio Yaqui in the Mexican state of Sonora.

Clell located a jaguar track and called the dogs. Five hours later and some thirty miles away, they crowded the cat into a mountain cave.

Clell and Dale were the only ones to reach the cave. The others had quit the chase when the going got so rough that a horse couldn't take it any longer. Clell and Dale had made the last ten miles on foot.

This was the first jaguar or *tigre*, as the Mexicans call the jungle cats, that any of the Lee boys had ever been after. They didn't know but what the cat would kill every dog they had. So the first thing they did was start grabbing hounds by their tails and hind legs and dragging them out of the mouth of the cave.

The hounds squalled in protest, but Clell and Dale cussed them until they stood back out of danger. Then the Lee boys went into the cave after the cat.

Clell packed the gun and Dale the flashlight. A few feet from the entrance the cave got black as the inside of a grave. The roars of the big cat had the stale air quivering. But there's a peculiar quality about a jaguar's roar that fools a man. Clell and Dale couldn't tell whether their cat was ten feet inside the cave or a hundred.

Dale kept flashing the light ahead, hoping to pick up the shine of the cat's eyes. Clell walked beside him, his trigger finger itching. In a little bit, the cave narrowed down so they had to take it single file.

Then the roof lowered until finally they were crawling along on their hands and knees. Dale now shot the light over Clell's shoulder, but still they couldn't locate the cat's eyes.

And they never did. The first thing they knew, there he stood, all mouth and bared fangs, about five feet away!

Clell and Dale were lying flat on their stomachs now. Dale said: "Believe I'd shoot him, Clell." And Clell guessed maybe he better had and took aim and shot. Just then Dale's light went out.

Clell lay where he was. "You reckon I got him?" he said. And Dale said, "I dunno. We'll see, quick as I can git this con-founded light to working again." So they lay in complete darkness with a possibly wounded jaguar five feet away, while Dale fiddled with a cranky flashlight.

Dale stopped to listen once. And, sure enough, he could hear the big cat's breathing. He wasn't roaring any more, but he was still breathing.

Clell heard it, too, and told Dale he wished he'd hurry and get that light fixed, and Dale told him not to get his feathers up, that he'd get the light fixed when he could. Finally the light snapped on, and there stood their cat, bleeding a little, but still on his feet.

Clell took better aim this time and stuck a bullet right between the jaguar's eyes.

Later, when they were telling their older brother Ernest about it, Ernest said: "Why, doggone! What if that old cat had taken a notion to come out of that cave after you wounded him with that first shot?" And Dale said: "Well, it wouldn't-a done him no good. He couldn't-a never got past me and

Brother Clell. The way we was layin', we had the hole plumb stoppered!"

Most of the time the Lee boys don't do the cat killing. They leave that to the dude who's footing the bill. Then he can shoot the cat and go back East and tell it around he's a lion-hunting fool. Sometimes it's harder to get the dude up within shooting range than it is to tree a cat for him. Let the going get too rough and fast and the chances are the dude can't stand the gaff.

This generally means that one of the Lee boys has to stay with the hounds to keep from losing them, one with the dude to keep from losing him, and a third to ride back and forth to keep the two parties from losing each other.

Sometimes the man with the hounds has to try to hold a cat or bear up a tree for a whole day while the rest of the party is sweating it up there. Once in a while the cat gets tired of waiting for the man with the rifle and decides to drop out of the tree and mix it with the hounds. When he does, things happen in a hurry.

Ernest was trying to hold a treed lion in the Chiricahua Mountains of Arizona when the old cat decided to come down. He left the tree in a squalling leap, hit the ground, and started slapping dogs all over the place.

Ernest didn't like the way the cat was butchering up good hounds and took a hand in the scrap. The hounds were fighting the lion too fast for Ernest to chance a shot. So he laid his rifle down, picked up a fist-sized rock, waded into the tangle, and beat the cat over the head with his rock until he put him out of commission.

Ernest, Clell, and Dale are the three main hunters today. The other boys have got sidetracked into operating cow ranches around Paradise. But they still fill in now and then and help out the hunting brothers when they're shorthanded.

Lately Ernest, who is the oldest of the bunch, has been leaving most of the harder hunting to Clell and Dale. Ernest hates to admit it, but he's not as young as he once was and he plays out if he has to run more than eight or ten miles afoot across mountain country after the hounds.

While the hunting itself came naturally to the Lee brothers, making a big business of it came about more or less accidentally. Their father, William P. Lee, had been a frontiersman and skilled hunter before them. He'd left the old Lee home in Virginia to migrate to Texas and eventually into Arizona, where he ran the first stage line into the Chiricahua Mountains. There he survived a thousand frontier perils, only to be struck down and killed in Douglas by a wild taxi driver.

The older Lee settled his family in the Chiricahuas where, to protect the ranch livestock, the boys took to hunting predatory animals. Little by little their reputations as hunters spread until other livestock men and even state governments were calling on them to hunt predatory animals all over the West. Sportsmen soon learned that "it is always good hunting when the Lee boys are with you," and started asking to be taken along on such hunts. By around 1925 the Lees had so many dude hunters from everywhere willing to pay good money for a chance to hunt with them that the brothers established a threefold business—guiding sportsmen after big game, hunting cattle-killing lions and bears for the government, and breeding big-game-hunting dogs for themselves and others.

Today they will arrange you a hunt for most any time, anywhere, to chase down anything from a javelina to a grizzly bear. Furthermore, they'll guarantee you to get what you're paying to go after.

They were forced to make this guarantee when a lot of would-be guides gave the business a bad name by taking good

money off green sportsmen but doing little to help them get their game.

If a dude the Lee boys take out doesn't get his trophy within the set time for the hunt, then the hunt goes on until he does. And at their expense. To date, the Lees have slipped up once on this sort of deal: one lion hunt lasted four days' overtime, but they still got their hunter a lion.

It's taken years for the boys to breed dogs to suit them. Now they're pretty well settled on the type of dog they want. And he's the kind they started with—old Texas blue-tick and red-tick, crossed with about three-eighths bloodhound.

In this breeding they've got a big, bell-voiced hound with a nose that can pick up a week-old trail, the endurance to run that trail thirty hours at a stretch, and the lusty courage that'll make him tackle anything that won't take a tree before he catches him.

Foundation stock for the Lee strain of hounds was Old Bull—bloodhound and red-tick—which in his time managed to get in on the kill of a hundred and thirty-eight lions. Today the Lee boys can sell just about any of Old Bull's progeny for as much as five hundred dollars a head.

There's no end to the number of yarns the Lee boys have to tell about their battle-scarred hound pack, or about the scrapes they've got into following the dogs.

One of Clell's favorite yarns is about the time he took the belt manufacturer, Ray Hickok, on a javelina hunt down in Mexico. The dogs jumped a drove of the savage little peccaries, which quickly took cover inside a small cave. Huddled together in there, they stood popping their teeth and sniffing, just daring some fool dog or man to come in after them.

In close quarters there's no more wicked scrapper than a javelina; nobody wanted to take the dare. Nobody, that is, ex-

cept Hickok. He wanted a javelina-head trophy so bad he was willing to risk just about anything to get one.

They talked it over, and finally Clell hatched an idea. If Hickok wanted to risk crawling into that cave up to his heels, Clell would stand ready to jerk him back out of the cave the instant he shot.

Hickok thought it was an excellent idea and proceeded to crawl into the narrow hole. Just before his heels went out of sight he called back to Clell: "Get ready, I see one!"

Clell caught Hickok by the heels. Hickok shot and Clell yanked, jerking Hickok out so fast that half his clothes were scraped off against the rocks.

And nothing happened.

Hickok was pretty certain he'd got his javelina but was ready to go back in and make sure. He crawled into the hole and shot again and again Clell yanked him out, tearing up more clothes and flesh.

And still nothing happened.

When they tried it the third time and no hogs came out, Clell reckoned maybe he'd better take a look. So he got down and crawled in, to discover that in the dimly lighted cavern Hickok had stuck three bullets square in the center of a chunk of rock that was about the size and shape of a javelina's head.

Hickok was embarrassed but game to make another try. He wanted a javelina head. So he went in a fourth time—and got results.

Razor-edged tusks were grazing Hickok's head as Clell jerked him out by the heels and slung him aside, like a sack of salt. The little javelinas came pouring out the hole with their bristles up; and men, horses, and dogs did some mighty fast scattering.

It was a narrow escape, not to mention all the stomach hide Hickok had left on the sharp-edged rocks inside the cave, but

he was satisfied. He had a boar javelina head to mount and hang over his office desk!

Ernest Lee contends there's not much to capturing a live lion. He says any good roper can do it. He says the trouble with most ropers who've tried it is that they get to listening to that God-awful cat roar and forget what they're doing.

All you do is wait until the hounds put a cat up a tree, then pitch a rope on him and jerk him off a limb. Of course it's handy to have a partner along to grab the cat by the tail just as he hits the ground. That way, it's no trouble at all to rush him inside a crate you've brought along to hold him.

Or if you don't have a crate and happen to be by yourself, then you just jerk him loose from his perch in such a way that he falls on the side of a limb away from you and hangs himself. Then you can rope his feet and draw them up and hog-tie them like you would any other animal you might rope.

That's all there is to it. Ernest says. That, and the ability to make a hurry-up getaway, in case something slips. He says they've roped dozens of lions which they've sold to circuses, public and private zoos. They even capture a live one every now and then to take home and train their hound pups.

Although all three boys wear scars made by the claws of the wild ones they've captured, Ernest says the greatest danger to them on a hunt is the hunters. There are men, he says, who may be excellent rifle shots and yet who get rattled at the sight of their first bear or lion and go all to pieces.

He soberly tells of the time in 1930 when the youngest of the original seven Lee brothers, Arthur, was along on a hunt and a family friend and veteran hunter lost his head. In the presence of a treed and roaring lion, with the wild bawling of the eager hounds about him, the hunter became so rattled that, unconscious of what he was doing, he swung his rifle about and shot Arthur, killing him instantly.

The Lee boys have not let that tragedy spoil their enjoyment of the sport, yet it has taught them to be extremely careful.

"You take a lion, a bear, or a *tigre*," Ernest says. "You can generally tell pretty well ahead of time what any of them will do. But an excited hunter now—well, you better keep an eye on him!"





## *Paul Revere Was a Piker*

BY KEN BYERLY

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Louis Remme, on horseback, raced a steamer from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon, and won. Long John Flaco rode the five hundred miles from Los Angeles to San Francisco in five days. Paul Revere's famous ride was over a twelve-mile route. But for sheer endurance and savage drama, Portugee Phillips' 236-mile horseback race for help in December 1866, through Indian country in the teeth of a Wyoming blizzard, is unsurpassed in the annals of the West. Ken Byerly, a long-time Wyoming newspaperman, many times has been over the country that Phillips covered.

**P**AUL REVERE's ride was a pleasant little canter when compared with John (Portugee) Phillips' epic horseback dash for help across Wyoming territory.

Revere raced twelve miles from Boston to Lexington on a mild April night through friendly country.

Phillips rode 236 miles—in four days and nights—in December 1866, across the high Wyoming plains through blizzard-driven snow while the temperature hovered at twenty-five degrees below zero.

Revere spread the warning of a British attack through a sleeping countryside; Phillips slipped past countless Indian

patrols to bring out the news of the terrible Fetterman massacre and send troops galloping to the relief of 119 men and a handful of women and children at besieged Fort Phil Kearney.

Unfortunately for John Phillips, he had no Longfellow to immortalize his ride in poetry. Today his name is all but unknown, even in his own Wyoming.

Perhaps Phillips' reluctance to talk about his perilous journey had much to do with the public's short-lived memory of his feat.

The full story of his ride never has been told, and what is known of it is pieced together from fragments related by the men who knew Phillips.

Equally little is known about Phillips himself. He told friends he was born and raised on the island of Fayal, in the Azores, of Portuguese parents. An American Army officer who knew Phillips described him as a "gigantic" figure.

He landed in America somewhere on the Pacific coast and worked eastward. He showed up in the summer of 1866 at Fort Kearney, a rough, rugged man of thirty-four years, and took a job as civilian employee of the post quartermaster.

Montana gold was then the lure. From the well-traveled trails to the south the newcomers cut northward into the Powder River country of northeastern Wyoming en route to Virginia City and its promise of riches. This was Indian territory, and the coming of the white man violated a federal treaty with the Sioux nation. Red Cloud, the great Sioux chief, was angry.

To protect the invaders the Army built a string of forts through the Sioux country just east of the Big Horn Mountains of north-central Wyoming.

Fort Kearney, between the present towns of Sheridan and Buffalo, was one of the most famous of the outposts. This is where Phillips' story begins.

On the morning of December 21, 1866, a wagon train left Fort Kearney for the foothills to cut firewood. A few miles outside the fort the train was attacked by Sioux.

Colonel Henry B. Carrington, commander of the fort, sent Captain W. J. Fetterman with a detail of eighty soldiers to rescue the wagon train.

What followed is not clear, but historians believe Fetterman disobeyed orders and pursued the Sioux beyond a forbidden ridge. At any rate Fetterman and his men were surrounded by 3000 Indians led by Red Cloud, and in less than thirty minutes the soldiers were wiped out.

That left only 119 men, including civilians, at Fort Kearney with an attack expected at any hour.

Then weather intervened. Out of the Big Horns that night swept a screaming blizzard, riding on twenty-five-below-zero winds. It was so cold that guards were able to stand only fifteen-minute watches. Colonel Carrington kept other men busy shoveling snow away from the fort's walls for fear the drifts would be used by the Indians to scale the stockade.

Meanwhile someone had to make the ride to Fort Laramie, 236 miles to the southeast.

John Phillips volunteered. He had only one request: that he be allowed to ride the colonel's mount, the fastest and best horse on the post.

He was to ride to the closest telegraph at Horseshoe station, on the North Platte River, 195 miles from Fort Kearney, and file his dispatch to Fort Laramie. The message, written by Colonel Carrington, read in part as follows:

Give me two companies of cavalry, at least, forthwith, well armed, or four companies of infantry . . . our killed show that any remissness will result in mutilation and butchery beyond precedent. No such mutilation as that of today on record. . . .

Phillips carried in his saddlebag a few biscuits and a scant amount of food for his horse when he reported ready to leave just before midnight on the twenty-first.

John C. Brough, sentry at the gate through which Phillips slipped when he started his ride, told the story of the departure fifty-one years later at a national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in 1917 at Boston.

"Colonel Carrington and Phillips conversed," Brough recalled. "The colonel reached up, shook his hand, and said, 'May God help you.' The horseman wheeled and started off at a trot. For about thirty seconds we could hear the hoofbeats, and then they ceased.

"The colonel stood with his head bent to one side, as if listening intently, and then straightened up, and speaking to no one in particular said, 'Good, he has taken softer ground at the side of the trail.'"

Those inside the stockade had listened with fear for some time, expecting to hear the dreaded war whoops, indicating that Phillips had been detected. They heard nothing but the howl of the blizzard.

A. B. Ostrander, also at the Boston encampment, recalled Phillips' arrival at Fort Reno, seventy miles southeast of Fort Kearney.

"One night I heard the sentry yell, 'Corporal of the guard,'" Ostrander said. "At the same time there were hoofbeats and a shout. I could not distinguish the words but they were in English. I was immediately relieved from the Indian scare. I heard hoofbeats passing along the trail at a smart trot. . . .

"John Phillips had come to, and passed through, Fort Reno alone. This was the most dangerous part of the journey.

"I remember one officer's remark, 'How did he ever get through Crazy Woman's Fork? The Indians must have been laying for him there.'

"Captain Proctor spoke up, saying, 'He didn't come through Crazy Woman's Fork. He told me he left the trail at Buffalo Wallows and came around five miles south of the fork.'"

Ostrander said the Indians knew a messenger would be sent and had the entire trail under watch.

At ten o'clock Christmas morning Phillips arrived at Horseshoe telegraph station. John C. Friend, the operator, said George Dillon and a Captain Bailey rode in with Phillips. No one knows where Phillips picked up these companions.

Friend said that Phillips sent two dispatches—one to the department commander at Omaha and the other to the post commander at Fort Laramie. Taking no chances on the wire being out, he paused only a few moments despite his three and a half days of torturous riding and continued on through the storm to Fort Laramie.

Other details of Phillips' ride were furnished in the early 1920s by Captain James Cook, of Agate, Sioux County, Nebraska. This cattle rancher on the Niobrara River was an old frontiersman and had known Phillips well.

Cook said Phillips told him that shortly before reaching Horseshoe station he was pursued by a large band of Indians on ponies. He outdistanced them, riding to a high hill, where he stood them off.

Phillips said he stayed on the hill all night, keeping a constant lookout, and with the first streaks of day he slipped through the Indian lines safely and soon reached the telegraph station.

Phillips also told Cook that after leaving Fort Kearney he moved off the trail, riding parallel to it at some little distance, as he knew the Indians would be waiting for him. For the first part of the trip he spent daylight hours in thickets and continued at night.

At eleven o'clock Christmas night Phillips reached his

destination. It was still twenty-five degrees below zero, and a Christmas party was in full swing at "Old Bedlam," the officers' club.

Phillips staggered into the room. One of the officers described him as a "swaying, gigantic figure, swathed in a buffalo-skin overcoat, with buffalo boots, gauntlets, and cap. He was covered with snow, and his beard trailed icicles."

Phillips gasped that he was a courier from Fort Kearney with an important message for the commanding officer, and dropped unconscious to the floor. The horse that had carried him 236 miles through cold and belly-deep snow already lay dead on the parade ground, where it had dropped the moment Phillips reeled from the saddle.

Phillips was revived, help was soon on its way, and the besieged at Fort Kearney were saved from almost certain torture and death.

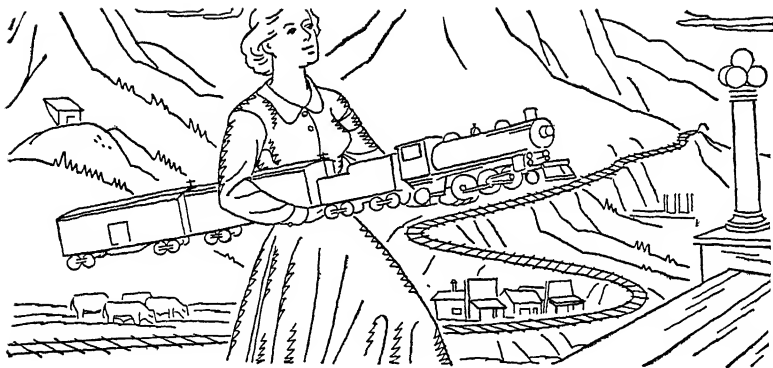
The Indians never forgot Portugee Phillips. They held a grudge against him the rest of his life, feeling that he had deprived them of certain capture of hated Fort Kearney.

Phillips continued to live in Wyoming but the Indians were constantly shooting or stealing his cattle. Once he was lassoed by Indians, who intended to torture him, but he escaped.

Phillips died in Cheyenne, on November 18, 1883, at the age of fifty-one. The terrible ride had impaired his health, which he never regained fully.

About 1899 Senator F. E. Warren and Representative F. W. Mondell, of Wyoming, secured a federal appropriation of five thousand dollars for Phillips' widow, in partial payment for the ride he made and as settlement of claims for cattle and horses of his, shot or run off by Sioux and Cheyenne Indians.

Today Phillips is almost unknown. An otherwise complete Wyoming guidebook of 490 pages published in 1941 devotes only six lines to this man and his ride.



## *A Railroad under Her Arm*

BY ELVON L. HOWE

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Of the nation's sixty-one mountain peaks of fourteen thousand feet elevation and over, fifty-six are in Colorado. Fourteen of these, flanked by a hundred more of over twelve thousand feet, are jammed into the southwest corner of the state—the well-termed “American Alps.” Such was the upended landscape in which road builder Otto Mears chose to build a railroad. Trains still run on that thrilling strand of “high iron,” pulled by a fleet of six valiant, fifty-year-old toy engines. With further poetic justice the “Rio Grande Impossible” also provides today's summer tourists a vehicle far more appropriate than the prosaic automobile for exploring a treasureland of minerals, legend, and magnificent scenery—a clattering hybrid known as the Galloping Goose.

THE STREAMLINER was halfway to Chicago before Betty Pellet's wrath cooled into realization that she was making herself ridiculous.

Washington, she knew, was in cyclonic confusion. With Pearl Harbor barely three weeks past, queues of fifty-thousand-dollar-a-year executives were fuming outside offices where a war machine was being somehow slammed together. Giant factories marked time, waiting for those same offices to issue the instructions that would set their production lines clacking.

A fine time indeed for a lone woman from the mountains to come pleading for the life of a tiny alpine railroad—a bankrupt strip of “high iron” battered for half a century by washouts, blizzards, hard times, rock and mud slides. And now, doomed by Uncle Sam’s order, its locomotives were to be commandeered and sent to Alaska. Wouldn’t those harried officials be impressed, she thought in womanly panic, to learn that the tangible assets of her adopted railroad comprised only 172 miles of wobbly rail, a few dozen venerable cars, and six ancient, miniature locomotives that incredibly had kept running year after year?

“I felt like Don Quixote’s sister,” she confesses today. “Every sensible brain cell I have—there are a few, you know—was telling me to get off at Chicago, go back to the mountains, and keep my mouth shut.” Connecticut-born Elizabeth Eyre Pellet had done a few other things before which would have startled her worthy ancestor, colonial Governor John Winthrop, out of his starched ruff. She was undoubtedly, for example, the only successful Broadway actress on record who had appeared some years later in the role of a mine boss—and doing right well, thank you, as active manager of a sizable lead, zinc, and silver diggings. In the election only two months previous, she had been chosen a new Colorado legislator. Now with a new war on and full of her own ideas about helping to win it, she was launched on her most impulsive venture to date—alone, inexperienced, with little influential backing and a whole state looking skeptically on.

Viewed coldly, the unsentimental circumstances made her whole purpose appear absurd. But in the case of this valiant little railroad, who could be unsentimental?

Idly she pulled from a portfolio beside her a bulky armload of briefs, charts, and statistics. Weightiest of all was a single newspaper clipping—an announcement by Federal District



Judge J. Foster Symes that after forty-five days "the Rio Grande Southern, one of the last two and most picturesque of the narrow-gauge mountain railroads still operating daily," would be abandoned.

That was all: a half-dozen paragraphs. But Betty Pellet knew—she had lived, rather—the other, unprinted story. To her the Southern, most spectacular of all mountain railroads, was not merely a decaying and impracticable curiosity which had lost money continuously for a half century: it was the lone, spindly thread of "dependable" transportation in a district where motor roads were and still are single-track affairs snow-choked for weeks in winter. She knew too well that the Southern's death meant not merely the passing of another fascinating relic but a body blow to her whole rich but remote region in its fifty-year struggle for rediscovery. Now that the nation had crucial need for this region's neglected mineral wealth, was the one shaky but indispensable means of moving those ores to be cut off? Was the "Rio Grande Impossible" Railroad, freighted from its beginning with the storybook stuff from which melodramas are made, to sputter out ingloriously without even a final grandiloquent gesture?

Leaning back in her train seat that late December evening, actress Betty Pellet took heart by recalling some of the details of the real-life drama in which she had determined to play out the final act. She thought of Otto Mears, the stormy little Russian immigrant who had flouted all the laws of engineering to build the Southern in the first place, and her Washington mission became not so outlandish after all. At least no more so, she grinned, than anything else that ever happened on the route of the Galloping Goose.

The first act had begun before Betty Pellet was born—against a stirring backdrop provided by the nation's most violent mountains, the "American Alps." A gold rush was on in south-

western Colorado, where six mountain ranges, jammed tightly together in a mighty granite uplift, throw up no less than fourteen summits to a height of fourteen thousand feet or more above sea level, a hundred more above twelve thousand feet.

It was a brawling time. Prospectors' diggings by the hundreds perforated the shadowy gorges and the Technicolor amphitheaters above timber line. Lawless mining camps bulged with new wealth counted in millions, and some of the nation's great present-day fortunes—notably that of the late Evalyn Walsh McLean—were being founded here by those who were lucky. The San Juan country was a road builder's greatest opportunity and his greatest challenge.

Before Otto Mears other builders, using brawn and black powder, had completed the all but absurd task of driving a railroad north from Durango up the mile-deep gorge of the Rio de las Animas Perdidas (River of Lost Souls) to alpine Silverton, 9300 feet high. There they stopped. Ouray, railhead at the northern edge of the range, was only twenty-four miles away, but getting there would involve a tortuous struggle up into the arctic boulder fields, a crossing of the Continental Divide at 12,000-foot Red Mountain Pass, then a plunge down the bare and awesome declivities on the northern side. Couldn't be done, the surveyors decided. Not even a wagon road could be put through *that*.

Otto Mears thought otherwise. Already a road builder without rival in a state where roads were everything, he had gouged out fourteen toll roads for the supply wagons, spanning 430 miles of supremely difficult terrain.

With his wonted disregard of engineer fellows, Mears began by blasting out of the raw rock walls above Ouray a Glory Road such as even he had never before attempted. As a wagon trail, it was frightening enough to evoke instant, meditative sobriety in the most blasphemous of bottle-belting mule

skinners. As an automobile road today, it's the broad, paved shelf of one of the most thrilling of modern highways, marked near the summit by a monument to its builder.

But he was bound to put a railroad through. He gained experience by building several short lines to mines above Silver-ton—one of these an incomparable little spur built on a seven per cent grade. (On that, one engineman testified, his locomotive could barely pull one car of coal and one "empty" up to the mine; the return was a matter of setting the brakes at the top and kneeling in prayer all the way down.)

Then Mears tackled Red Mountain and managed to reach the pass. But the cliffs below stopped him cold. The engineers were right: it couldn't be done.

But Otto Mears was no man to be pushed around even by a mountain range. He took note of the fact that other mining camps lay just a few miles across the impassable ridges to the west. Rico, Matterhorn, Ophir, Placerville, and canyon-locked Telluride, where an explosive porridge of immigrant and native American humanity seethed and bubbled like the restless mash at the bottom of a high-walled brewer's vat. If he couldn't push a railroad down the last twelve miles through the center of these mountains, he'd drive another 172 miles around the western flank of the range, where the San Juans shoulder against the La Platas and the majestic peaks of San Miguel. Just like that.

Again the engineers laughed. The proposed route, they pointed out, was not only many times longer but beset with difficulties hardly less formidable than the descent from Red Mountain Pass.

Mears built it in two years—a railroad without counterpart. Not one of its 172 miles was on level ground. It toiled up and over four mountain passes, the highest a 10,250-foot crossing under the sunset shadow of a huge, reptilian spear of rock

named Lizard Head. It required no less than 132 bridges, many of them lofty wooden trestles over booming freshets. And the total climb and curvature of its twisting tracks were the equivalent of a staircase of eighty spirals, 8000 feet high!

It was a summer day in 1891 when a bunting-draped inaugural train chuffed out of the terminus at Ridgway, beyond the range just north of Ouray, to show the state's notables what had been done. Up the piñon-covered slopes of Dallas Divide the tiny engine (secondhand—the Southern never owned a new one) fought for every precious foot of altitude, then quickly lost it all on the descent to swarming Placerville. Thence it started up again, winding the ocher and purple gorge of the San Miguel River, and took the spur to Telluride, coming to a dead end and a celebration that echoed to the top of the 1000-foot, blue-veined cliffs overhanging the town.

A retreat to the main line and eight hard miles of climb brought the top-hatted guests into sight of Otto Mears's all-time wonder of mountain railroading: the Ophir Loop. Here, under a cluster of rock pinnacles fully a half mile tall, the rails crossed the canyon on an astonishing wooden trestle 450 feet long and almost a hundred high. Station house and dwellings of a tiny village were hung on the cliffside, accommodating themselves to the tight curve of track as it doubled the end of the canyon and climbed back several hundred feet above itself on the slopes of Yellow Mountain.

From there it was a goatlike scramble along the curving face of the cliffs and across six more frightening trestles to Matterhorn, a steep-roofed village straight from Baedeker's Tyrol.

Two panting miles and a full half hour farther was Trout Lake, a sapphire expanse set in the vermilion cirque of the peak named just that. Then a labyrinthine series of switchbacks that straightway acquired the nickname "Mears's Puzzle," and finally the Lizard Head summit.

Fourteen miles and a dozen more trestles farther down the southern side, festivities were waiting.

Rico, then the world's largest silver camp, had already welcomed another train that had climbed over two lower passes and up the grassy valley of the Dolores River on the southern half of the route. Now it riotously feted conqueror Mears as the customary golden spike was driven.

Shouted to his feet for a speech, Mears rose and proclaimed himself absolutely terrified, declared that no man in his right mind would ride on the railroad he had just built, and roared for horses and wagon to continue his journey!

Despite such deplorable salesmanship, the Southern had been instantly prosperous. Passes of sheet silver and gold, delicately filigreed to Mears's personal order by a Denver goldsmith, were dispensed to local notables with a free hand. Many a miner, scorched by the bright lights of pistol-packing Durango, rode back to his job upon nothing more than his promise to buy a ticket from friend John the conductor next payday. (Rumor had it that friend John himself often neglected to turn in even what passenger fares the more conscientious had paid. The Southern was too busy hauling ore to care greatly about such minor revenue.)

But good times lasted a mere two years. Panic and the federal demonetization of silver in 1893 spread sudden paralysis over the whole Silver West. The boom was over. In a few months the Southern was in receivership.

Much of the rest of the tale Betty Pellet learned first hand after her arrival at unpainted, quiescent Rico shortly after the first World War. This carefully reared daughter of the New England Eyres had carried her diploma from the American Academy of Dramatic Arts directly onto the Broadway stage, where she shortly established herself for a three-year run as Robert Hilliard's leading lady in *The Argyle Case*.

Then she had made two fearsome Western movies in which, as she puts it, "the horse and I never relaxed our mutual distrust," fell in love with and married the late Robert Pellet. The latter, of Yankee lineage on a par with her own, had decided to come West and work some of his family's almost forgotten mining properties "for a year or two."

After that they never thought of leaving, even on the occasion of Betty Pellet's most painful initiation into her new way of life. That was during the first summer when, in her best Abercrombie and Fitch riding habit, she set forth with her husband, the sheriff, and two other men on a grueling four-hundred-mile chase across the New Mexico-Arizona desert after thieves who had stolen some of their horses. They brought back the horses, but Betty barely survived.

In no remote sense a Tugboat Annie, Betty Pellet nonetheless had a zest for living that took her early down into the mines with her husband. She liked the "feeling of age and power" deep underground. Her working knowledge of the mining game came the hard way; after finally conquering the older miners' superstitions against the presence of any of the female sex in the shafts, she once carelessly let her light go out while poking around alone and crawled a third of a mile to daylight behind her whimpering dog. Today she talks with minute knowledge not only of geological structures but of the mountains themselves and their unsurpassed grandeur in her district. When illness some years later made Robert Pellet permanently an invalid, she took over the mine.

At first her interest in the Southern was mainly financial. It was, after all, the only dependable carrier for smelter-bound Pellet ores. But as time went on she became more and more steeped in a wholly uneconomic admiration for the unconquerable little railroad and the stubborn, prideful men who wouldn't let it die. That feeling is general almost everywhere in

the San Juan—a touchy loyalty that will get a quick clip on the jaw, verbal or manual, for the scornful stranger who makes bad jokes about the rickety Southern.

(Some of the more historically accurate of those jokes concern the vicissitudes caused by non-indigenous animals traversing the line. There was the time an outsized carton full of side-show snakes developed a leak and the slithering reptiles caused the suspension of all business for many hours in and around Telluride depot. There was also the circus-laden train which couldn't quite pull the grade on Dallas Divide until the elephants got off and walked. Southern partisans have never quite been able to stamp out a canard to the effect that the elephants had to get off *and push!*)

Yes, the Southern was still running. Was and still is. But what a struggle!

Hardly had the Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad taken over the little road in the nineties as a rather unwanted subsidiary than the mountain goliaths began to swing massive punches at their impudent little adversary.

Five times roaring spring floods carried away almost the entire trackage on the thirty-mile river-bottom stretch between Dolores and Rico. Once the dam impounding Trout Lake went out and the flood took with it twenty-two miles of track. Seldom was there money for new rail; the old was fished out, straightened, and patched together almost yard by yard to keep the cars rolling. Ties rotted, bridges sagged, tiny 30- and 42-pound rail warped until it was hardly straighter than so many lengths of ribbon laid through grass.

Slides joined the floods. Once a huge boulder tumbled down on a moving freight, neatly removed two cars at the center of the train, and deposited them on the bottom of the canyon a thousand feet below. The wreckage is a thought-provoking sight for train crews passing today.

At Ames siding, where a mountainside is moving, a section of track has been doggedly rebuilt almost every year. Once a full half mile of track slid 750 feet down the slope and traffic over the pass stopped for twelve months. But receiver Victor Miller found the money somehow and rebuilt the gap.

Snow was annually an almost insuperable problem. Frequently the Southern's entire fleet of engines united behind one rotary snowplow to ram through drifts higher than the smokestacks. Five engines once required seven sixteen-hour days to open a thirteen-mile stretch. Sometimes the tightly packed snow had to be dynamited. Brakemen kept their cabooses well provisioned, ready any time to be stranded in the snow for days. In prolonged storms, they often had to open the baggage car and help themselves to provisions consigned to the little grocery stores up the line. Fifty-foot drifts and seventy-mile gales are not uncommon.

In very recent times a dozen passengers were stranded nine long days near Lizard Head, surviving on food dropped from airplanes.

Nor does the coming of spring bring much relief. Down on the lower passes near Durango the mud is almost worse than snow. Here Otto Mears had built his railroad "around the alfalfa patches, not through them" (since his route was financed by the mile, he had to put in many extra low-country miles to pay the tab for such endeavors as the Ophir Loop), and the unballasted ties sank into the soft goo. Rails, too, spiked as they were to the gradually rotting wood without tie plates, spread or turned over on slightest provocation.

Derailments occurred almost as often as trains went out. Trainmen merely took down the "frogs" from the back of the caboose and wearily pulled the cars back onto the tracks. The veteran freight conductor J. H. Crum, whose wife Josie is the Southern's most faithful historian, recalls one memorable



sixty-mile trip from Dolores to Durango when he had to uncouple his engine and haul derailed cars back onto the tracks no less than twenty-six times.

Engineers and firemen have learned to stay well inside the cab so as not to be crushed when the engine drops off the track and the tender climbs onto its back. There is hardly an engineer on the Southern who has not, several times, "bailed out" of a locomotive which had suddenly decided to take a roll down the mountainside. They ride always ready to take sudden departure.

Fatalities were entirely too frequent. At Bilk Creek one night in 1910, the first of two engines coasting downhill by the light of their kerosene headlamps plunged through an S-shaped trestle. Engineer Al Bickford was killed and Fireman Jasper Compton, scalded and pinned beneath the engine with a broken leg, lay waiting for fifteen minutes for the second engine to tumble down on top of him. It did, with two cars of the train behind it, but Compton survived. The uninjured fireman of the second engine lit running and, so far as local records indicate, is running yet. He completely disappeared.

Hard times of the thirties brought monumental improvisation but no abandonment. To cut down expense in passenger and baggage schedules, the Southern's miracle machinists procured an aged Rolls-Royce automobile engine, fashioned a ten-passenger cab on trucks behind it, and articulated a baggage car to that. Out on the main line this clattering nonesuch instantly acquired the name and fame of "Galloping Goose." Six of them still ply the passes daily with steam-powered freights operating about three times a week.

Still it was touch and go. More than once Betty Pellet got the mineowners together to volunteer higher freight rates in order to keep the Southern going. Judge Symes, appointing the late Cass Herrington to succeed Miller as receiver for the road,

issued a warning that the operation would continue only if the railroad avoided going into debt. Five counties agreed to forget all about taxes on the right of way.

A generation ago the Southern, though still sorely needed, was whipped. Many times it was pronounced dead—an impossible operation. But somehow this sensible information never seeped down to the tired old cars, worn out for decades but still rolling. Nor to the men who ran them. Remarkable men they have always been, as spectacular in their own way as the upended landscape that is their home. Sadly underpaid and facing a daily diet of hazards and improvisations that would make the less hairy-chested quaver, they held to their own code and are as proud a gang of “rails” as one can find.

Faithful old-timers almost to a man, they took jobs in filling stations, road gangs, and stores when traffic fell off, but were back in a minute when a freight was called. Engines and cars that rolled down the mountainsides were pulled back to the roundhouse and rebuilt so many times that hardly an original part remained.

Thus it was that every time the Southern's successive “funerals” were scheduled, General Manager C. W. Graebing always found just enough steam in his little engines to interrupt the services with the derisive toot of another freight going out.

Always, that is, until bombs fell on Pearl Harbor and the official word came down that the Southern was finished.

Betty Pellet, just returned from a round-the-world cruise undertaken in a vain attempt to restore her husband's health, took up the cudgels for fair. A few days later she had got together a meeting in Denver of fifty state officials and business leaders. Their regretful conclusion: nothing whatever could be done.

That was why, right now, Betty Pellet was on an eastbound

train. As angry as if she herself had been unjustly accused of a crime, she had stopped at the hotel only long enough to pack and had bought a train ticket forthwith. Now she was headed for Washington, armed only with total inexperience, headlong determination, and the compelling personality of her quite stylish fifty years.

The latter, plus the good offices of one or two friends from the mining country, got her past long waiting lines of important people. To the astonishment of her sympathetic senator, she had letters within twenty-four hours from no less than four of the very highest defense officials affirming the need for continued operation of the Southern. But the battle had only begun.

From congressmen's offices to bureaus to postal authorities she trudged day after day, lugging her armload of statistics and surveys. Everywhere, early and late, she told the same story—how the nation had never before needed so badly the metals her region could provide; how the San Juan basin, after fifty bitter years of paralysis and isolation, at last could make a significant contribution to victory if its only railroad were permitted to carry on. With heat and eloquence she pointed out that the government was already planning to help finance a railroad in Peru to get the same metals available in San Juan mines.

At the White House she belabored the ear of Presidential Secretary Eugene Casey while both crouched on their knees in a hallway during an air-raid drill. Sent by one Washington bigwig to see another, she asked in sudden doubt, "But how will he know who I am?"

"That's easy," chuckled the b-w. "You're the only woman running around Washington with a railroad under her arm."

She pleaded well. A week before the abandonment order was to take effect, all parties agreed that the Southern should

not only run but should have financial assistance as an emergency carrier. The decision rested between the RFC and the Post Office Department, each insisting that the other give the initial okay.

More suspense, while both stood adamant. Finally, on her third visit, the Postmaster General of the United States, Frank Walker, gave in to Betty Pellet, of Rico, Colorado. "Mrs. Pellet," he remarked, "I grew up in a mining camp and I know what a time they've had. If I can stretch a point and help one camp survive, I'll do it. You may have your mail contract."

Even then there proved to be no legal foundation whatever for the government loan to provide necessary operating improvements. But Betty Pellet provided a final bizarre touch to her Washington sojourn. Threading somehow through a maze of legalities, she "sold" the railroad to the Defense Supplies Corporation for sixty-five thousand dollars in exactly the same manner as if she had been representing a foreign country—through lend-lease! Her triumphant telephone call to Colorado was a photo finish as melodramatic as the rescue of virtuous Lil in those long-forgotten Western movies she had made.

The Southern went on to repay every dime of that sixty-five thousand dollars—and carried in the process some of the ores that went into the making of the atomic bomb!

Today, with the mines enjoying their greatest prosperity in thirty years and the farms of a whole new inland empire growing up in the area immediately west of the ranges, there is a new vitality in the whole San Juan region. Tourists, too, learning a belated appreciation of the remote, the picturesque, and the genuine in their own land, have tripled in numbers since the war. So many want to take the thrilling roller-coaster ride on the Galloping Goose that receiver Pierpont Fuller, Jr., puts on special schedules during the summer.

But to be one of the lucky few who, like the writer, get to ride a freight—that is adventure distilled. One such trip with

Conductor Crum occupied a full, brilliant October day and covered only the sixty miles between Durango and Dolores—(scheduled time: ten hours). But never was a passenger transported so far from a harried present into an utterly amiable yesterday.

It was a matter of leaning back in the creaking cupola of Caboose 0403 under the idle observation of ponies and calves which trot ahead of the train in pastures alongside.

It was a drowsy four-mile-an-hour process of watching brake staffs caterpillar ahead like a parade of drunken sleepwalkers as the wheels sank into the deep and unco-ordinated depressions in the tracks. There was a long midday snooze near Hesperus while the engines uncoupled and chased five miles ahead for water, because they couldn't quite pull the seventeen miles from Durango without refreshment.

There was wonderful coffee boiled in a lard can hung in pine smoke inside the calabash stove of the caboose.

There was an evening stop in the quiet meadows at Mancos, with the purple peaks of the Sleeping Ute wrinkling the horizon to the westward, while the train crew went uptown for dinner.

There was an unforgettable night ride on the toy engine with a ludicrous five-foot throttle, No. 20—built in 1899 but still, in the age of airplanes and atom bombs, clawing its way "up the hill" like a frantic Shetland stallion hitched to a log.

And later, in the drafty roundhouse at Ridgway at the other end of the line, there was the pitted, Gay Nineties shape of Engine 41 shining sturdily under brave new paint as it was being rebuilt for the umpteenth time.

When new motor roads eventually come through, the Southern may find its task finished and disappear. But until then a man would be a fool to predict that Engine 41 (or No. 20 with its magnificent accelerator) will ever quit slugging it out, all winter long, with the snow demons of Lizard Head.



## *The Smoke Jumpers*

BY DON DAVIS

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During the summer of 1949 an ancient, angular Curtis Travelair slid cautiously into the busy, streamlined aerial traffic over Washington, D.C., and several Forest Service smoke jumpers parachuted to the Mall with full fire-fighting equipment under the gaze of television cameras. Thus the capital had its first glimpse of the hazardous everyday work of the government's colorful defense force charged with the protection of our remote national forests. Don Davis, who began his career with the *Denver Post* as a copy boy and is now its top assistant city editor, lived and flew with the youthful smoke jumpers at their home base in Montana to get this story.

**T**HERE, Buster, about fourteen hundred feet down on the rugged slope below, is that Nez Percé forest fire. That's why you've ridden this bucking, ancient Curtis Travelair seventy miles southwest from Missoula, Montana, into Idaho.

You're going to put that fire out, Buster. You're tough, it says in the U. S. Forest Service literature. All you've gotta do now is parachute, snag that twenty-eight-foot silk canopy on a high pine tree, snake to the ground, and battle that blaze for about two days, then start walking out of the woods. That's all.

Buster, old alter ego, let's not kid each other this way even if

talking to yourself helps a little. This work is risky as the devil—or else why is your mouth getting dry and your stomach kicking up with a quick, cold clutch every now and then? You've even speculated on the possibility of one of these Rocky Mountain downdrafts hurtling this crate into the mountains. You shouldn't have, though.

Bob Johnson, Missoula's veteran mountain pilot there at the controls, has nearly twice five thousand hours' experience back of him. He's pioneered smoke-jumping flying since its beginning in 1940, flown men to more than seventeen hundred fires.

Check your gear, Buster. It's good to have this thick, heavily padded two-piece canvas suit with wide collar that slips up around the back of your head; chute harness, back-pack chute, an emergency chute in front, tough shoes. Yes, there's that seventy-five-foot "let-down" rope and two orange streamers in the pocket on your lower right trouser leg.

It's about time to put on that football helmet with wire mesh mask. Earl Cooley, the spotter this trip, just dropped the drift chute to get the wind speed.

Cooley, first man ever to jump to a forest fire and one of 1940's six-man smoke-jumping force, ordinarily doesn't make these flights. He's occupied mostly with training and experimental work. But he'll direct the pilot with experienced skill to give you and your partner sitting across the plane there an ideal place to jump from.

"Hook up," he signals as the plane circles back onto the course. Okay, Buster, get that static line from the chute snapped onto the overhead cable in the plane. Now crouch and put your right foot outside on the step. Keep low. Keep your gear clear of the sides of the door.

Your mouth's dry as burnt liver. Take some deep breaths. Calm down! Your heart sounds like a machine gun. Think about something else. You've jumped before—four times this

year. The plane's slowing down—almost to stalling speed. There's that slap on the shoulder from Cooley.

Leap, Buster!

You really drop fast.

Hug yourself! Don't foul up those chute lines.

Straighten up . . . the shock of the chute's opening won't be so bad that way. It's going to open, isn't it?

Sure it is, Buster, take it easy. That was packed by Jim Waite, combination dispatcher, timekeeper, and parachute rigger back at the Service's parachute loft in Missoula. He knows how important it is to pack those chutes properly. He's smoke-jumped himself.

There's that jerk, Buster, just like getting snubbed up short by a lasso. The chute is open. Look at that white silk canopy blossoming up there. Beautiful. Lovely. Loveliest silk in the world.

That fall before the chute opened really wasn't so far, Buster. Only about thirty feet. Seemed farther, though. There's your jumping partner. He's floating down in his chute just above and ahead of you.

Okay, Buster, look down. Are you going to overshoot that fire? You're going about five miles an hour forward. It's about a thousand feet down to the timber.

Start guiding with those seven-foot steering slots in the rear of the chute. Pick your place. Pull right on the risers and you go right. Pull left, turn left. Those are really Derry slots, named after Frank Derry, former chief instructor at Ninemile Camp of the Forest Service.

Recall those camp stories about Frank? What a life he's had, huh, Buster? A native of Wenatchee, Washington, Derry joined the service in 1940, was one of the original smoke jumpers and also made most of the first sixty experimental test jumps.



He went to business college in Wenatchee, moved to Los Angeles, entered the trucking business and also was working for the Douglas and Northrup aviation corporations until that 1934 Christmas that altered his life.

That was when Frank wanted some extra money for presents for his wife, Edith, and his children, Frank and Frances.

He convinced a department store of the great publicity they could get if they had a Santa Claus drop from the skies to the delight of kids and parents. He borrowed a beard, a red and white Kris Kringle outfit, talked a pilot friend into flying him over Los Angeles, and made his first jump.

After you make that first jump, Derry says, you feel like you can't get enough of it. Horse racing may be the sport of kings, he adds, but parachuting is the king of sports.

After the successful Santa Claus routine, Derry entered the parachute sales and service business at Los Angeles, and interspersed ground monotony with barnstorming tours throughout the West, jumping at county fairs and shows.

"Those were the days when we wore pretty white suits and dropped pamphlets on the little towns, reading: 'Come out and ride the planes and see Daring Derry leap in a parachute' (possibly to his doom)," Derry recalls.

His worst leap was at Los Angeles when he broke an ankle, two ribs, pulled the ligaments in one leg, and dislocated two vertebrae. He made three hundred jumps before he quit counting, saying, "Jumping is a young man's game. When you get over twenty-eight the injury possibilities increase too greatly."

Now he's in the boatbuilding and sporting goods business at Flathead Lake, Montana, but he plans to explore the ocean in a deep-sea diver's outfit and thus fulfill the last chapter of a boyhood dream: to make a parachute jump, ride a submarine, and make a deep-sea dive. He's made the submarine trip.

Snap to, Buster. Quit talking to yourself. Amazing how many things you can think about in a few seconds' time. Start picking out *the* tree. Use those slots. Get in there just right: don't hit the tree yourself or you'll really get a branch lashing. Don't go between the trees. They'll just collapse this chute and you'll hit the ground with about the same effect as if you'd stepped out of the plane without benefit of silk.

There. You're slipping by the timber top. Just a few slaps from the limbs. Ah, the silk caught and the branches gave gradually. Pretty easy. Thanks a lot, Lord.

Your mouth is getting moist again.

Get down, quick. There's the fire to stop. You got plenty of training on how to get to the ground. Work that let-down rope through the front D-rings on the harness. Take it up and through the risers. Tie it securely. Make a loop for your right foot. Keep hold of the rope. Hit that quick-release device and you're out of the chute and sliding down to the ground on the rope.

Your buddy is okay. Signal the plane with the streamers that all's well. Cooley's dropped those cargo chutes with the equipment. Those fire packs coming down have shovel, Pulaski tool, two days' K rations, canteens, water bag, and compass. We won't need the crosscut saws or radio for this fire.

Get those tools over to the fire—it's only two hundred yards away. Get over and do the roughest, dirtiest job in the Forest Service—put out the fire.

Dig the fire trench first. Isolate the blaze. It doesn't have to be deep. Just shovel-width, scraping the forest duff toward the fire.

Separate the fuel from the fire. Stand those glowing logs up on end, they won't burn so fast. Keep checking uphill, ready to jump fast after any blazes started by wind-driven sparks. Pray the wind stays down.

Shifting wind could make a man-killer out of this. Twelve smoke jumpers and a ground fighter died in 1949 in that inferno in the Gates of the Mountain area of Helena National Forest.

Snap to, Buster. Chop away the unburned limbs. This isn't anything like the big fire where more than five hundred men battled the flames on a twenty-one-mile perimeter. Those jumpers parachuted over the fire line into virtually inaccessible Mann Gulch.

Watch out for falling snags. They killed two of those boys over at Mann before the wind slapped that fire back over them. You're not in a remote spot like that. Swat at these flames with your shovel. Those guys were in a canyon. A five-hundred-foot trail had to be hacked into its rock walls to bring their bodies out.

Stop thinking. Throw dirt on this fire; dirt won't burn. You can whip it. You've got to keep working on this fire until it's out. You've got to be able to put your hands in cold ashes before you leave.

It's rugged. That's why they had you running that obstacle course in training at Ninemile. That's why they insist on your keeping in top physical condition by putting you to work on forest projects—cutting hay for the remount station, building fences, clearing trails and roads—between jumps.

When the fire's out you can gather up your gear and begin that trip to the ranger station where you'll get a truck ride back to Missoula. . . .

The blaze was put out quickly and efficiently, and thus ended the season's one hundred and fiftieth "smoke jump" in the Forest Service's Region I.

So successful has been the 160-man smoke-jumping force for the last four years in quenching fires in the eight million remote acres of the region—Montana, Idaho east of the Salmon

River, eastern Washington, and the western Dakotas—that C. S. Crocker, assistant regional forester and fire control chief, has requested a force of 400 men. Thus far the necessary funds have not been appropriated.

The great value of smoke jumpers is that they can speedily reach almost inaccessible areas and limit to a quarter acre a fire which might be raging over a thousand acres before ground men could get to it.

Before rains ended the 1949 fire season with smoke jumpers working in force for the fourth consecutive year, 1551 fires burned out 7613 acres in the region's total of 33,000,000 acres. This is in contrast to 12,600 blaze-ravaged acres in 1945—a high year in this decade—and an average of 65,000 acres annually in the ten years prior to 1940, when smoke jumpers first were used.

Crocker points out, however, that this reduction was not wholly due to the smoke jumpers because other variable factors—dry spells, high fire-danger conditions in other years—also must be considered.

Using the jumpers, though, resulted in a saving of about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars annually in suppressive costs, Crocker says. The smoke jumpers include ex-paratroopers, ex-soldiers, Navy veterans, former Marines, many ex-Coast Guardsmen and some college forestry students.

Deaths of the twelve jumpers in 1949 ended the unit's ten-year-old no-fatality record although there have been scores of minor-injury casualties.

All smoke jumpers are trained each year in Montana, first undergoing obstacle-course training similar to that in the Army, and calisthenics designed to toughen muscles and teach safe landing techniques to prevent injuries during tree or open-ground landings.

Each trainee jumps thirty to fifty times from a twenty-five-foot tower wearing equipment, minus chutes, with the harness attached to a rope. Through a pulley arrangement, the rope pulls him up sharply to simulate the opening of the parachute.

Let-down training includes painstakingly careful lessons to teach the jumper to lower himself to the ground while suspended from a cable. Then follows mock-up training, wherein the student learns to handle himself inside exact replicas of the planes used by the Service. Then come seven practice jumps into varied terrain.

"It doesn't help a smoke jumper to have been a paratrooper," says Glenn Smith, in charge of maintenance and rigging. "We can teach the men to jump. What we want is a man who can put out the fire. The Army system was designed to get seventy-five per cent of jumpers on the ground. Here we use precision work and strive to have no casualties."

When a fire is sighted by a lookout in one of the region's national forests, the ranger in the district makes his decision on how the blaze will be fought. If smoke jumpers are needed, the ranger notifies forest headquarters, which in turn relays the information to the regional dispatcher in Missoula.

The dispatcher orders the jump in a telephone directive to the loft, located at Missoula. Twenty-five jumpers are kept on call at the loft at all times. As they leave for fires, other jumpers are brought in from Ninemile and other camps where they have been working on Forest Service projects.

During winter months the Forest Service keeps a handful of veteran jumpers at the loft. They repair chutes damaged by trees and weather and conduct experimental tests of proposed gear changes.

They also keep in readiness for instant use the medical supplies and litters to be used in the event of an air-rescue leap.

Smoke jumpers are on call to any civilian or governmental agency for air-rescue work involving jumping into isolated areas to bring medical aid to injured.

What does a smoke jumper get for risking his neck to preserve the forests? Base pay of \$258 a month, a five-day, forty-hour week, and at the end of the three-month fire season he's out of a job. Like wartime volunteers, his is a job that pays off mostly in glory.



## *Bill Carlisle—Train Robber*

BY EDITH EUDORA KOHL

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A generation ago small boys of all ages thrilled to the exploits of Bill Carlisle, the train robber who never harmed a soul, treated women with courtly deference, called his shots, and made miraculous escapes. The law eventually caught up with Bill, and so did respectability. Now for the first time Carlisle, who has become a successful Wyoming businessman, tells his story. Edith Eudora Kohl, a pioneer newspaperwoman and former member of the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine staff, is well known for her historical articles.

**W**HAT BECAME of Bill Carlisle, who held up four Union Pacific trains—one with a toy pistol—and made his escapes like a phantom in the night?

Over the last twenty years many have asked that question about the young plains bandit who never took a woman's money, yet created a furor over the nation with his spectacular stick-ups.

Even after he was caught and imprisoned, Carlisle never told why he committed those daring crimes, nor how he made his miraculous escapes. Here at last is the strange and thrilling story as told by Bill Carlisle. . . .

One February night in 1916, on the blizzard-swept Wyoming plain, a white-masked figure stepped nonchalantly into the observation car of the Union Pacific's eastbound Portland Rose as it pulled out of Green River.

He told the lone woman occupant not to be frightened and stalked on to the other cars where, gun in hand, he ordered the porters to pass their caps and take up a collection.

"But don't open any berths occupied by women or children," he admonished.

He put the loot in a pocket of his mackinaw, backed out of the coach he had robbed last, and climbed to the top of the car. When the conductor pulled the emergency signal he leaped to the ground, rolled down the bank, and vanished before the train could stop.

Next morning special trains converged on Rock Springs from Omaha and Cheyenne, carrying Union Pacific officials and special agents, posses and horses to track down the bandit. Combing the frozen hills and snow-filled gullies, they picked up their quarry's tracks only to lose them in the fresh-broken ruts of an automobile.

Several days later a flannel-shirted ranch hand waited for a shave in a Green River barbershop, his face behind a newspaper that carried details of the unsuccessful man hunt. Presently the town marshal stomped in with a snow-caked mackinaw he had found hidden in an alley. He showed it to the men in the shop and from a pocket he pulled out a white silk handkerchief—the bandit's mask. Bill Carlisle looked up from the newspaper, mildly interested. He had abandoned the coat an hour earlier.

As the sheriff scoured the town, Carlisle sauntered into the depot after his shave, brushed against two men discussing the new clue, and bought a ticket for Cheyenne. He boarded the train along with two strangers he later identified as special



Union Pacific agents—McClements and the late well-known Charley Irwin, of Cheyenne.

So far no one knew what the train robber looked like. But he had held off the brakeman with a toy pistol while pointing a small .32 revolver at the passengers.

"The *Denver Post*," Carlisle told me, "figured oddly in that first holdup. I had been in Denver looking for a job. While standing with a crowd in front of the *Post* looking at the news bulletins a man came out carrying the cutest toy gun, handle painted black, butt silver.

"'Where did you get that?' I asked him, and he said the *Post* was giving them away to anyone who placed a want ad. I gave him thirty-five cents for it—the price of his advertisement. I intended to fill the pistol with peppermint candy and send it as a Christmas gift to my sister's children back East.

"But I was out of a job and every time I filled the gun I ate the candy. When the brakeman surprised me during the holdup I put my hand into my pocket and there was the toy pistol. So I stuck it in his ribs."

In jumping from the train his little gun fell from his pocket. He had hated to lose it.

After the robbery Carlisle had taken to the hills, keeping to the wind-swept ledges so he could not be tracked in the snow. Then circling back to the lowlands for food and shelter, he had been forced to move back to the railroad.

Having spent years as a ranch hand in Montana and Wyoming, Carlisle was hardened to the country. From Cheyenne he moved on to Wheatland, Wyoming, then footed it northeast into the Horse Creek and Cottonwood districts, where he found work.

Bill Carlisle says of that first robbery, "I bartered my life and freedom for fifty-two dollars. I held up that first train because I was desperate. Hungry, cold, jobless, with only a

nickel in my pocket. At Cheyenne I tried to get work in the railroad yards but they were laying off crews. I rode the blinds on to Rawlins in a raging blizzard, but the yards there had more men than they needed. I rode the rods, for better protection from the storm, to Green River.

"While I was standing at the station waiting to jump a freight, the Overland Limited came through. I stood looking at the warm, comfortable coaches with their bright lights and well-dressed people.

"I walked close up to the diner and looked at the food being served. I had made my own living since I was nine. If I could only get money to live until spring I could get work. The idea of holding up the train came to me on the spur of the moment. That train had pulled out but while I was still wondering what to do another passenger pulled in—and I got on."

On April 5, 1916, newspaper headlines screamed that the Union Pacific's crack Overland Limited had been held up a few miles west of Cheyenne by a white-masked man, probably the same bandit that had held up the train two months earlier.

While the passengers stared, the bandit told them there was a reward of fifteen hundred dollars on his head and now was a good time for some of them to get it. But no one challenged him. All hands went roofward while the porter went down the aisle ahead of the robber, passing his cap to right and left.

After a frightened woman had dropped her purse into the cap for the third time the porter cried, "He done tol' you, lady, he don't want no woman's money." Then to the gunman: "She's gov'nness to Marshall Field's chillun."

He still didn't want her money.

When a young man with shaking fingers dropped his watch and chain into the cap, the gunman placed them in his pocket. "To help the Pinkerton detectives identify me," he said. The collection this time amounted to some five hundred dollars.

He backed from the car, warning the passengers not to follow. "If there's any shooting somebody in this car might get hurt—and this money ain't worth it," he warned. He leapt from the platform and, instead of fleeing, he lay still for hours by the railroad tracks, watching men in cars and on foot searching the roads.

After the hue and cry died down Carlisle wandered through the homestead country north of the railroad, stopping with isolated settlers. Now there was a five-thousand-dollar reward for the bandit, dead or alive. He said to a homesteader, "Why don't you folks go out and get that bandit?"

A comely young woman eyed him quizzically and said, "Now where do you suppose we'd find him?" He smiled at her. She knew.

Men suspected of the train robberies were being jailed all over the country. Carlisle wanted to make sure no innocent man would pay for his crimes. He wrote a letter to the *Denver Post*, already swamped with false clues, declaring that he was the robber. "To prove it I am enclosing a watch chain I took in that last holdup," he wrote. "It can easily be identified. To convince the officers they have the wrong men in jail, *I will hold up the next Union Pacific train west of Laramie.*"

Carlisle came into Denver on the same train that carried the letter. He slipped by the police at the station by carrying the luggage for a well-dressed woman passenger. He boarded the Union Pacific Limited No. 21 with a Pullman ticket. At Laramie he mailed the *Denver Post* a letter written on the railroad's stationery, telling them he was keeping his promise.

"You will know the handwriting," he said. "And you have the chain. Am leaving the watch with the Union Pacific detective."

As the train pulled out of Hanna, a small station west of Laramie, Carlisle flashed a gun in the face of the chief guard,

a plain-clothes man whom he had drawn into conversation about the robber, and made him take up the collection. When the money was turned over he said, "Now hand me my suitcase."

With it he swung off the train steps, calling back to the guard, "Don't follow me. You've got a family—I don't want to hurt you. . . ." But as he jumped he fell and sprained his ankle. All night he hobbled across the rough desert to the Platte River bottoms. Next day the posse caught up with him.

From the heavy brush in which he lay hidden he could have picked off the lone advance rider, or half the posse for that matter. The *Denver Post* carried the story of the capture under this headline: "Bandit Surrenders Rather Than Turn Killer—Lays Down His Guns When Officers Are Afraid to Disarm Him."

He took nearly four hundred dollars in that holdup. "But the big haul was made," he observes, "by the respected citizens who put claims in to the railroad for many times the amount I got."

Carlisle was promptly tried and sentenced to life imprisonment. When the gate of the state prison at Rawlins clanked behind him the lone outlaw could look at his hands and thank God that at least they were free of blood. That fact was very important to Bill Carlisle.

How much had the influences of his early life to do with Carlisle's bizarre career? Born in York, Pennsylvania, Bill Carlisle's earliest memories were of being pushed around from one orphans' home or unsympathetic relative to another. His mother died when he was a baby and his father, a crippled Civil War veteran, could not take care of him and the four other children—two girls and two boys. Nobody wanted him.

He spent much of his time around the railroad yards with the gangs of boys playing Jesse James with cap pistols, reading

Nick Carter stories, and picking up coal along the tracks. The railroad "bulls" were always after him, and once they hauled him into police court for taking the coal. Folks around the tracks never thought of it as stealing.

At thirteen he ran away on a freight train, getting small jobs wherever the crews or yard bulls threw him off. To him the railroad police were cruel creatures and "the railroad" a powerful monster. His oldest brother, a railroad engineer, had been killed in a train wreck. Bill wandered west in search of his other brother, a cowpuncher. From that time he had worked on the ranges.

In the penitentiary Bill Carlisle turned out to be a model prisoner, never complaining and rarely hobnobbing with the other inmates. After three years the state board of pardons reduced his sentence from life to fifty years. He was then twenty-eight.

One cold November night a few weeks later the prison siren wailed the news of an escape. Bill Carlisle was loose. The news spread across the country, and again no small wave of sympathy and good will rode with the fugitive. Another cool exploit of Bill Carlisle, the gentleman bandit, had captured the unpredictable public imagination.

His method of escape was unspectacular, but it was hours before he was missed. For some time Carlisle had been in charge of the office in the prison shirt factory. On a Saturday afternoon, with the factory closed and most of the inmates at a movie, Carlisle called a drayman to pick up a rush order for Chicago. Then he crawled into a specially built box under a layer of shirts and waited.

It was barely dark when Carlisle walked out a side door of the freight house and down the tracks. He ate breakfast with the section hands at Creston siding, then struck into the rough hill country until he stumbled onto a sheep wagon in a

draw. There he found a rifle, changed to the herder's clothes, and was burning his prison garb when the camp tender rode up. When the herder came in later the three ate supper. The sheepmen found it pleasant to have company.

Back at the railroad, disguised as a sheepherder, Carlisle found all trains west were being guarded. So he boarded an eastbound freight. With rifle in hand he posed as a guard (they were now thicker than jack rabbits) in the Rawlins yards. Later, as he climbed off a freight, a brakeman said, "So long, Bill," and a landlady at Laramie pushed back his money for a day's lodging with, "I'm thinkin' you'll need it."

But Carlisle knew that soon he would be caught in Wyoming. He decided to get to Canada and join the army. But he needed money.

The evening of November 21, 1919, as the westbound train pulled out of Rock River west of Laramie, a tall gaunt figure stepped from the snowsheds and bounded to the steps, broke the locked door with his gun butt, and covered the surprised guard. Carlisle was sticking up another train.

Inside the car, he stood stunned. Most of the passengers were doughboys coming home! Momentarily confused, he passed his own hat among the civilians only, saying to the soldiers, "Keep your money, boys, I don't want it."

Carlisle jumped as the train pulled into Medicine Bow, and passengers and guards fired wildly from the windows and doors. They were afraid to search for Carlisle in the dark. They did not know that he was crawling across the tracks like a wounded animal, leaving a trail of blood.

An armed youth had followed him to the vestibule. As Carlisle knocked the gun from the young man's hand it discharged, the bullet ripping through his own hand and wrist.

Federal, state, and local officers swarmed over the area, but somehow Carlisle eluded them.

Bill Carlisle and I went back over that country and he pointed out the scenes of his getaway. "Right over there," he said, pointing out the window of the diner, "are the sheep corrals that I crawled through to shake the bloodhounds they were bringing in. The scent of sheep is strong enough to kill out human scent."

On the other side of the track across rough, pocketed terrain sat a small house in a clump of trees. "There," he said, "is where I stayed all next day right in sight of the railroad watching U. S. troops being unloaded for the man hunt."

North of Medicine Bow is a vast stretch of mountain country with peaks, canyons, dense timber, and grazing lands where isolated ranchers are cut off by deep snows. There the fugitive found refuge among friends and strangers alike. Those who did not know him guessed who he was.

He bandaged his wrist and crossed the range on foot. One night he knocked at the door of the Springhill ranch near the foot of Laramie Peak. The rancher looked first at the bandaged hand, then at his own rifle standing against the wall, and said, "Didn't you see the posse's fire a half mile down the trail?"

No, Carlisle hadn't, but he was almost frozen. Guy Newell and his wife set supper, did what they could to ease the pain in the stranger's hand, and fixed the spare room upstairs.

This writer knew the rest of the story except for a few missing links that only Carlisle could furnish. My people owned the Springhill ranch.

Next day Carlisle stopped at the Braae homestead. After dinner when Mrs. Braae was alone the stranger followed her into the kitchen and said, "I think I should tell you—I'm Bill Carlisle."

"Yes," she said, "I thought so. You want to stay till dark, don't you?"

He gave the children money for Christmas presents out of his fast-dwindling haul of eighty-two dollars from the holdup.

Suddenly one of the Braae children exclaimed, "Look! A bunch of men." Carlisle ran out the back door and up the timbered hill. Chief Special Agent McClements, of the Union Pacific, and Sheriff Roach, of Wheatland, came up the trail. Carlisle watched from behind a nearby boulder, rifle in hand. He could have riddled them.

At daylight next morning, so weak from fever and the two weeks' exposure that he could barely walk, Carlisle stumbled into a miner's secluded cabin above Estabrook, a mountain resort. The miner said, "Go in the bedroom and get off some of those frozen duds while I get breakfast." Carlisle laid his snow-clogged rifle on the bed.

Two men suddenly appeared, called the miner out, and covered him while others surrounded the cabin. Carlisle stepped to the doorway coatless, vest open, hands empty, to face the two officers whose lives he had spared the night before. The sheriff shouted, "Hands up! Higher." The right arm, stiff to the shoulder, could not be raised and instantly a bullet from the sheriff's rifle smashed through Carlisle's chest and out through his back.

As he fell to the floor the two men rushed in and kept him covered until the other four officers in the posse came in. The law was taking no chances.

It was forty degrees below zero and some forty miles to Douglas, the county seat. Thrown across a horse's back, Carlisle was taken down the long snow-drifted trail to the road and the car. The torture he had suffered on that trip, Carlisle recalls, was a high price to pay for any crime.

At the hospital where he lay near death with a torn lung, an arm that might have to be amputated, and pneumonia, he was shackled to the bed.



The hospital was crowded with influenza patients. Carlisle was put in a double room with a convalescent man who gave him water, easing his position when the overworked nurses were out.

As Bill Carlisle reviewed these events, he said, "I've wondered who that man was and where he is. I was too sick to ask his name."

"His name," I said, "was Thomas Ammons. He is dead. He was my father, the man who owned the Springhill ranch."

Back at the penitentiary Carlisle remained in a serious condition a long time. As his health improved he read a great deal, took a business course by mail, bought a typewriter from sale of his leather work, and served as librarian.

The Reverend Gerard Schellinger, the Catholic prison chaplain, worked with Carlisle, believed in him, and waged a long fight for Carlisle's parole, promising, "Should he ever commit another crime I will serve time either for or with him."

"He made a new man of me," says Carlisle.

On January 8, 1936, after almost twenty years in prison, Bill Carlisle walked out, a free man.

He opened a small cigar store in Kemmerer. Why had he stayed in that region? That took courage, I remarked, and he replied, "The best place to find a thing is where you've lost it."

Soon after his release he was stricken with acute appendicitis. When hospital attendants told Lillian Berquist, superintendent of nurses, that Bill Carlisle had been brought in, she went to him. She nursed him efficiently and understandingly. At Christmastime they were married at a little Kemmerer church.

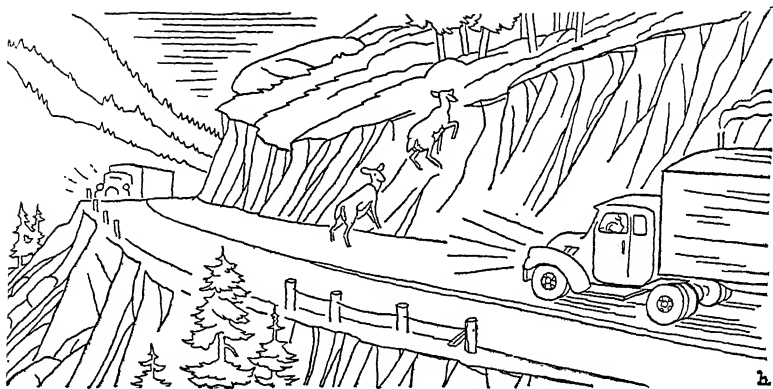
With a down payment of ten dollars Bill bought a vacant piece of ground near Laramie, started a filling station, and leased an adjoining run-down cottage camp which he bought later.

By degrees he has built up a modern camp and a popular café.

"Sticking to this place," Bill told me, "has been a hard pull. I almost lost it several times."

Nowadays Bill Carlisle can walk into a Laramie bank and make four-figure loans with no security but his own signature.

"Honest as the day is long," a leading citizen describes him. "Bill? He's a fine citizen," say most of the others about town.



## *Giants of the Night*

BY JANE TRUE

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For trucker George Eastman, wrestling a semi over the Continental Divide from Denver to Grand Junction is a routine overnight jaunt. All he has to do is manipulate the steering wheel, clutch, throttle, brake, and two gearshift levers while watching a bank of dials and the tortuous mountain road in front and behind. For world-traveled Jane True, daughter of the noted muralist Allen True, the ride was unmatched for thrills and drama.

**E**VER RIDE twenty-five tons in "fifth over" at sixty miles an hour down Glenwood Canyon? It's a new chapter in anybody's book of thrills.

Along with every motorist who ever drove a pass, I have often watched the giant semitrailers straining up and charging down the high mountain passes linking the two slopes of Colorado's Big Divide, wondering what it takes to handle one of them.

I found out. I rode a semi over the Continental Divide from Denver to Grand Junction. This is one of the toughest routes in America; loads as heavy as are hauled anywhere are carried over the divide at Loveland Pass, 11,992 feet above sea level.

The men who nightly think those monsters over the shelf roads and down the gorges of the silent Rockies are a race apart: ever-laughing sorcerers with a mighty magic in their hands.

George Eastman, the slim priest of this cult, who took me over the top and down into the fragrant peach valleys of the Colorado River, has my unstinting gratitude and awed respect. He got me there alive.

My night with the truckers began when they checked in at the Rio Grande Motorway terminal shop to pick up their tractors. Eastman and Wilbur C. Medlin, his teammate that night, who followed us in another diesel giant, were inspecting their equipment when I arrived.

It was 8 P.M. The echoing garage, big and neat as a Dutch parlor, was brilliant with lights and gorged with the roar of motors. Several tractors, the front pulling sections of the semis, were parked over the pits, their exhaust outlets connected with a hose that carries the fumes outside. The innards of these tractors are as well known to the maintenance men as a doctor knows a hypochondriac.

Eastman and Medlin had their tractors drawn up side by side, examining them and marking an inspection check list similar to one a pilot must okay before taking a plane off the ground. If a driver doesn't like something about his equipment he has the same right to refuse to take it out as a flier has to refuse a plane.

The tractor suited Eastman; he swung into the driver's seat and moved out into the night on his way to pick up his trailer, which was being loaded at the freight docks.

There, bundles and boxes of all sizes and shapes were stacked high—potato sacks for the San Luis Valley, carbonic gas for soda fountains, paint, whisky, chairs, butter, wheel rims, veal carcasses with their nudity veiled in skintight cheese-

cloth, coffee, radiators, and cantaloupes—all piled according to destination.

Eastman's tractor was about forty feet from his trailer. Taking one quick sight on his target, he roared backward until the "hitching" plate of the tractor was neatly and exactly under the trailer connection. The 30,000-pound load bucked up a few inches as the tractor connected, its dolly wheels now off the ground.

No. 278—the tractor Eastman always drives and knows like an old, old friend—was set. Dolly wheels were rolled up and the cargo doors sealed.

Back he went to the maintenance shop, where the same exacting inspection was made of the trailer; the air-brake connections, called "gladhands," were checked, the tires given an experimental kick.

Medlin in the meantime was ready. The caravan was buttoned up for the road. I looked at George, motioned to the suitcase at my feet. It is to everybody's credit that nobody swore. Nobody even looked mad. They simply broke open the seal of Medlin's truck, a procedure resulting in pages of explanations to the ICC and shippers, and stowed it away.

Amid chuckles (it isn't every night a trucker has a lady kibitzer), we got under way at 10 P.M. Inside the cab the song of the motor is rather like a huge waterfall crashing a thousand feet onto granite. As we picked up a little speed I noticed a new note in the caterwauling.

"The fuel pump," George said. "There's nothing wrong with it, it just drives you crazy."

As we lumbered through the streets of the city, with lesser, more agile traffic skipping around us with indignant hoots of their horns, George gave me the first lesson. It begins with the dashboard, which is more complicated than the instrument panel of a small plane.

A semi, like a plane, is operated in relation to the antics of a tachometer. This instrument indicates the revolutions per minute of the crankshaft.

Most of the way we ran with the tachometer reading between 1500 and 2000 revolutions. The gear used (there are ten forward speeds), the throttle position, and the grade of the road determine the tachometer reading. I think.

Another gauge indicating the engine temperature has to be carefully watched, particularly in high altitudes.

If the engine heats, the driver "drops" a gear or two. This circulates more water. The diesel fuel is carried in two fifty-gallon tanks just behind the cab. The trip to Grand Junction uses about fifty-one gallons of fuel.

Semis have two gearshift levers. They aren't always operated one at a time, as would seem reasonably easy, but both at once much of the time. One gearshift corresponds to that in a passenger car and changes the ratio of gears in the transmission. The other controls an overdrive in the differential. Follow? The effect of the overdrive is to halve each of the five gears, giving ten speeds.

Thus there is first gear, under and over; second, under and over, and so forth. The highest gear is fifth over. In this gear, on level ground, the unit can go about sixty miles an hour. There is a governor on the semis, however, which keeps the maximum speed (on the level, mind you) to forty-five miles an hour.

"To shift gears," George explained, both hands and feet working like mad while he steered with his arm thrust through the huge steering wheel, "the throttle should be kept two thirds open. Every gear change requires double-clutching." It seemed to me that every change required clutching with every available limb.

Normal—to him—shifting on the open road was impressive

enough, but when, later that night, four horses ran onto the road and George wanted to gear down in a hurry, his speed and slick handling of those two sticks was nothing short of spectacular.

The portion of the road usually requiring the most gear changing and often the lowest gears, is not on either Loveland or Vail passes. It is just west of Denver as the highway cuts behind the hogbacks. Here is an area of "dead air," and the temperature gauge goes hysterical.

Moving up Mount Vernon Canyon, we met several trucks and a semi rolling in toward Denver. Each time they winked at us, and George flashed his lights back. Truck and bus drivers depend to an astonishing extent on their lights for communications. Horns they use very seldom, except in daylight hours, and even then they signal each other with lights.

"One flash means everything's jake," Eastman explained. "Two short ones means there's trouble within twenty-five miles, such as a washout, wreck, or a conscientious cop. Two long ones means trouble beyond twenty-five miles. Three means stop."

Most police leave the truckers pretty well alone, George said, knowing that they are good drivers.

Truckers like to move in pairs so as to help each other in case of trouble. The heavier and slower truck goes in front so they can stay together easily.

Eastman and I were in the lead truck; all the way to Grand Junction he kept an eye on the truck behind him in his rear-view mirrors. The mirror is indispensable to a trucker—he's got more trouble behind him usually than he has out front.

"If the rear driver 'tailgates' the front truck," Eastman said, "he's taking an awful chance of landing square in the hind end of the front truck. A good driver will keep a respectable distance—and also keep his lights out of the front man's eyes.

"Any good driver of any vehicle will dim his lights when coming up behind another one," George added.

Winding toward the crest of Genesee Mountain, he told me tales of the "gear jammers," drivers of small trucks who know none of the rules of the road and confound their brothers.

"The gear jammers stop in the middle of the highway," he said. "They aren't satisfied to pick up rocks at the edge of the road—they climb the darn mountain to find the four biggest rocks they can carry, then put them behind their wheels. When they get going again, they just drive off and leave the rocks."

At the top of Genesee Mountain, Eastman checked the air brakes before starting down. Seemed like a good idea.

If a break occurs in the trailer-brake system, and it locks, the driver can mechanically set the tractor brakes, and vice versa, in time to keep the unit from jackknifing, the maneuver that every driver fears.

A few miles beyond Idaho Springs we stopped at a little roadside café for coffee. I was ready. My ears were protesting and I was exhausted from watching George wrestle with the gears. He felt fine.

Over some darn good java, one of several other drivers there asked me how it went. I made some sound through a doughnut that indicated I was overpowered by the difficulties of shifting two gears at once.

"How would you like to have three of them?" somebody inquired.

"What the devil would you shift the third one with?" I asked, aghast. Loud guffaws from all hands.

Traffic thinned out as we turned onto the Loveland Pass road. The night was clear and cold and the heat from the engine felt good. George drove in his shirt sleeves, and I peeled off several layers of sweaters as the long climb began to throw warmth back on us.



From the highway hugging the cliff above, the few lights there were in slumbering little Georgetown appeared as a reflection of the stars in a deep well of blackness. The night began to be lonely. Suddenly five deer bounced out of the darkness into our headlights. George signaled "something in the road" to Medlin—a quick series of flashes—and slowed down.

The spring-light creatures, dazzled by our lights, leapt in front for several hundred yards, then George blew the air horn at them. Noise brings animals running confused in the headlights to their senses. They sprang to the side of the road. Five white patches signaled their disappearance.

"How long have you been driving?" I asked George.

"About twenty-one years, I guess," he said. "Long enough to know that these semis are just like mules—just about the time you think you know 'em, that's when they set you down. I used to be a 'hot shot,' but I think more of safety now than of showing off."

Gearing, George assured me, is not as strenuous as it looks. When a man is working himself hard (and I quote him—it seemed to me he should be worn out by then), he's hard on equipment.

A good driver knows the art of gearing to save himself and the equipment, which, by the way, is worth about fifteen thousand dollars, empty. He prefers night driving, he said, because it is easier.

We hit the gravel road high on Loveland Pass at 1:25 A.M. A shy crescent moon appeared down the valley and Orion hung just at the sky line, close enough to steal his sword.

As we bounced along the rutted dirt I began to suffer the tortures of the damned. My teeth started aching with a fury, first one, then another. I asked if drivers ever noticed this. George said he never had but didn't know about the others.

New snow lay lightly on the ground, tentatively, sparsely.

Old snow on the high passes has a settled, sucked-down look, having clung to the steep places after tons of its kind have succumbed and melted to the rivers below. The snow that late autumn night had an innocent look, as if it didn't expect to last long.

We growled up to a tight hairpin turn. The tractor nosed along the outside guardrail like a mole going home after a hard night, while the trailer slowly swung close enough almost to touch.

At the top Medlin and Eastman got out to check tires and brakes. "It's just as well to have something to stop twenty-five tons coming down that twister," Medlin remarked. That, too, seemed reasonable.

All went smoothly. I asked what happened if the semi jumped out of gear. "It gets fixed damn quick, that's what happens," George replied.

"In winter on this pass," he mused, "wolves chase the trucks just like dogs chase cars."

I asked him then if he ever had had a semi jackknife with him.

"Only once. I had a hot shot from New York and a half-breed Indian with me, teaching them mountain driving. We were on Battle Mountain. On a slick road, which this was, just like oiled glass, we ride the high side. Then if the trailer slips, we can go down after it.

"The trailer slid out from under us. I went after it.

"Just as I got it up she slid again. I couldn't catch her. The guy from New York jumped—he hit that slick road and sure spun his wheels. The Indian was too scared to jump. I couldn't, or I would have. The trailer swung up cheek by jowl with the tractor and that stopped her. I felt like an old man."

There's a long straight stretch where the oil road begins on the far side of Loveland Pass. There, for the first time, George

gave that giant its head. The fuel pump began to scream like a wounded eagle and the countryside blurred by. We came down upon a lodge outside Dillon, a coffee stop, like two furious elephants. But that was fun. There weren't any curves.

As we walked in the door the lights went out in the lunchroom. Eastman and Medlin took a ribbing from the other drivers there and went out in the kitchen with Leta Archer, the waitress, to fix the fuse.

When they returned they asked where the doughnut chiseler was. He is a Great Dane named Buffer who begs shamelessly from the drivers.

"He's got a tater trap like an alligator," George confided.

"Until I see that dog's still around I'm not eatin' this bus driver's T-bone [hamburger]," Medlin said. "'Tain't safe."

"They used to have thin cups," George stated, waving a thick mug, "but the coffee ate 'em out. Now they use 'em as glasses."

Leta flourished a meat cleaver in their direction.

As he went out the door, laughing as if the night were a baby and he had nothing more to do than bounce it on his knee, George called back:

"Turn that coffee bean over before we come back!"

"And take the socks out of the urn," Medlin offered.

I thought the coffee was delicious.

It takes as long to go from Denver to Dillon, which is seventy-seven miles, as it does from Dillon to Grand Junction, a hundred and eighty-three miles. We were halfway. The last long uphill pull of the trip is up Vail Pass. I dozed off for a moment or two.

When we hit the top of Vail, Medlin passed us—he had freight to unload in Glenwood and wanted to take his lighter load ahead. I woke up thoroughly after the first few seconds of downhill traveling. The road off Vail Pass is curved—but not enough to make the truckers slow down.

The handling of a trailer on a curve is different from any other high-speed curve driving. The tractor is turned into the curve and the trailer allowed to swing into it, then it's led out by the tractor. The moment that trailer swings is just plain ghastly—you are never sure it won't just swing on over. George was sure.

Down the deserted highway we thundered—the white trunks of aspen trees flickering by. Several times deer leapt into the lights and out again. Down over the Eagle River and along its banks—then outside Wolcott a magnificent old buck joined us in a mad race through the night.

His antlers were spectacular. For a full minute he ran in front of us and we could see them clearly. For all his age and dignity, he was fleet as he was handsome. Finally he sprang off the road.

The only living thing that knew we rushed through Eagle was a cat whose eyes shone from one side of the road as we came into the town. He dashed across in front of us.

The hills of the Glenwood Canyon, cut by the Colorado River and the lost waters of the Eagle, were dimly outlined against a sky that betrayed the coming of dawn. As we came into the canyon itself, still riding like children of the hurricane, the high cliffs, always magnificent, seemed newly carved from some pale orange gem. Looking back up the river toward the rising of the sun, the valley was like a faded Chinese painting, delicate, misting, benignly mysterious.

The thirty-two miles from Gypsum into Glenwood Springs we did in thirty-five minutes—and I think I established a new record. I didn't breathe in or out the whole time.

Sitting high in the cab, watching the morning being made, I prayed that I should see the completion of that process. Meanwhile, I had my doubts.

To get to the loading docks in Glenwood we had to cross a

long, ill-begotten bridge with a large sign saying "Load Limit Ten Tons." We made it.

Medlin had been there six minutes. He was "spotting" his trailer—backing it into the dock. That done, we went to breakfast. George drove a company sedan, still clowning. He couldn't seem to get the car out of low gear without horrible grinding sounds. With breakfast in the offing, I didn't care.

We had waffles, over and around which George told stories about old and expert drivers.

We left Glenwood at 7 A.M. The sun had made good on its promise and was bright on the high mountains.

Down past Rifle he showed me the oil-shale plant high on one of the cliffs, a blue heron standing on the banks of a small pond, wild ducks fishing on the river.

From Rifle to Palisade, the mountains, weirdly colored, seem to have been partly sliced away: castles and embattled towers appear against the sky. It is a stretch of land eminently suited to the making of fairy stories and fantastic legends.

We entered DeBeque Canyon in full daylight; Medlin was again behind us and the trucks were running fast and smoothly, as if they knew we were on the home stretch.

The last few miles into Grand Junction are the roughest: the pavement is literally laid in blocks, and the tractor gently bucked at each joint. The trailer nudged us, reminded us of the tons we had pulled through the night.

I asked George why he didn't get tired. He explained that a driver learns to ride with his tractor, easing the strain.

We came into Grand Junction at a modest speed, as if caution were our motto. I looked down upon the cars with a pleased disdain. Scooters, merely scooters.

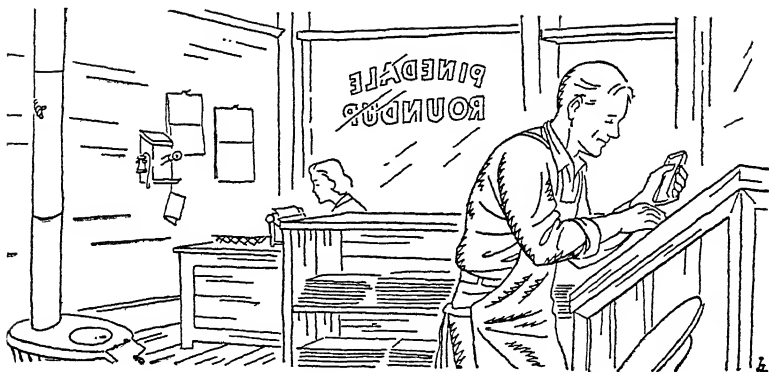
We pulled up to the docks. I could still move, I discovered, so climbed out to witness the final duty of the truckers. They signed a drivers' register, kidding the girl in the office.

I asked George one last question: "Why are you a semi driver?"

"There isn't any other job that's as interesting and pays as much for so little work," he said.

Remembering the blue heron, Glenwood Canyon at dawn, and the game old buck, I understood the first part of his answer. But knowing that a driver like George *thinks* a semi over those mountains, as well as wrestles it, I disagreed with the "little work."

Summer and winter, the semis are rolling over the road I traveled. Their drivers are a race apart.



## *Indifferent Deadline*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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Newspaper life a mad hustle and bustle, did you say? Not so in log-fronted Pinedale, Wyoming, where editors Pete and Ione McReynolds learned to adapt their pace to local tempo soon after they took over the town weekly. The result: an indifferent deadline for the lively *Pinedale Roundup* that can be adjusted at will to take care of more pressing matters—fishing, for instance.

THE PINEDALE *Roundup* is a newspaper which theoretically makes its weekly appearance each Thursday. Sometimes it is Friday—occasionally even Saturday—before the *Roundup* hits Pinedale's single main street. In one memorable instance, however, it came off the press a whole week early.

The vagaries of the *Roundup's* deadline are, nonetheless, not its main claim to distinction. It sets itself apart from many another rural weekly with the boast, so far undisputed, that it is "Published farther from a railroad than any other newspaper in the United States."

If rivals are curious, the actual distance is a hundred and four road miles south across a desert to the Union Pacific tracks at Rock Springs. (Distances seem to have considerable signifi-

cance in this corner of Wyoming; the Big Piney *Examiner*, only other newspaper in Sublette County, proclaims it is "published seventy miles from a railroad.")

Despite its irregularities, the *Roundup* is a thriving newspaper with a circulation near the 1000 mark. To understand its unhurried character, one must get acquainted with the publisher and the community he serves.

The first is Pete McReynolds, a husky, drawling, amiable native Wyomingite with an old-time printer's pride in his craft. At forty, his hair is graying. This, he asserts, is the result of the worries that attended the early period of his seventeen-year proprietorship.

Pinedale, the county seat, has grown in a decade and a half from 300 to 700 population. The town owes its existence partly to its role as a headquarters for cattle ranchers, partly to the tourist trade en route to and from Yellowstone National Park, Jackson Hole, and the Thousand Lakes country.

But neither expansion nor the influx of large numbers of outsiders has jarred Pinedale from its ways. "No one," says McReynolds, "worries about being on time. We just don't think that way."

Few except the small fry manage to get to the theater on time for the four-times-a-week, once-a-night movie. To accommodate its patrons the management runs the newsreel, comedy, and shorts both before and after the main feature.

Or take the hand-crank telephone system. Under an unwritten code of ethics, no one calls after 9 P.M. except in emergency. The operator goes to bed then, and of course it'd be a shame to get her up.

Telegrams telephoned in from Rock Springs have a habit of being typed out and dropped at the post office for delivery.

"If our readers never observe a deadline," McReynolds says, "it doesn't make sense for their newspaper to try to keep one."



After all, we only promise them fifty-two issues a year, and they get them."

McReynolds' wife, Ione, demurs, but not too vigorously. "We do feel bad when we come out late. Honestly."

It was back in September 1933 that McReynolds took over the *Roundup*. He was twenty-three then, the youngest publisher in Wyoming, and filled with a resolve that approached desperation. But his contact with the newspaper business goes back more than another decade.

He started at eleven in Riverton, Wyoming, as a printer's devil. By the time he got out of high school in 1927 he was a journeyman printer. Then the depression came, a bank went broke, and he lost his job. That was 1932.

"I went down to Kansas, but I couldn't find work," McReynolds recalls. "Sure, they'd be willing to hire me on as an apprentice printer. But I was a journeyman, and when I told them so they'd look at my face and laugh and tell me I was too young to have had that much experience."

Then McReynolds heard that the *Roundup* was up for sale. Established in 1905, it had changed hands on an average of every four and a half years. McReynolds hurried to Pinedale and closed the deal in an all-night negotiation session.

These were the terms: McReynolds placed a down payment of a hundred and twenty-five dollars, sixty of which was a check that was good, sixty-five a check that might be good someday. He then assumed payments of ninety-one dollars a month and signed a note for five hundred due in three months.

In return for these considerations McReynolds got a newspaper with a paid circulation of 250 copies and four regular local advertisers, a tiny printing shop, a quantity of battered type and ancient machinery, a paper stock that consisted of five hundred envelopes, and the services of a printer who was to be paid twenty-five dollars a week. The printer thought he saw the handwriting on the wall and promptly walked out.

At this juncture Ione entered the scene. As Pete's fiancée she felt obliged to come to his financial rescue and lent him the two hundred dollars she had been saving a nickel and a dime at a time.

A month later they were married. Pete says she did it to secure the loan.

Ione then was as new to newspapers as she was to matrimony. Pete could set the type and print the paper, but he didn't know beans about writing, either. The first week together the newlyweds were up until all hours of the morning puzzling out their paper. Thanks to these heroic measures, the *Roundup* appeared on time.

At the end of three months of proprietorship the McReynoldses wound up with a bank balance of a dollar and thirty-seven cents after all bills had been paid. That was the low ebb of their publishing fortunes.

In those lean days the McReynoldses used to go into the woods and bring back their firewood, and many a time they were able to pay the grocer only because Pete organized his own orchestra (he operates on the sax and piano) to play at Saturday night town dances.

But gradually business improved, and just as gradually the McReynoldses and the *Roundup* accepted the local philosophy of getting it done tomorrow if it didn't get done today. "There was," Pete says with finality, "no sense in killing ourselves to be on time if no one cared."

Sometimes the obstacles to punctuality were mechanical. In the early days a gasoline pressure-burner was used to melt the metal in the linotype machine. The flame seemed to be either too hot or not hot enough and McReynolds asserts he spent more time adjusting it than in setting type. Butane gas takes care of the problem now.

One summer Fremont Lake went nearly dry and with it

Pinedale's hydroelectric supply. "Every evening," Pete recalls, "as soon as people began to switch on their lights there wouldn't be enough juice to turn our machines. We'd just go home until about eleven o'clock, and come back and work until daylight."

But at other times the indifferent deadline is a matter of choice, based on the publisher's judgment as to what is important. Perhaps the trout are biting, or the elk season is waning. Relatives may drop in and want to try a new fly on the rainbows at Half Moon Lake.

"The news," Pete says firmly, "can wait."

Once Pete's dilatory tactics resulted in scooping the whole region. Saturday had arrived, and for some now forgotten reason the paper still had not been published.

Then a local saloon was held up and a pair of bandits killed the barkeeper. Every other newspaper in that section of the state had gone to press for the week, but *Roundup* readers were treated to full coverage.

Many editors feel they have the responsibility to their readers of printing all the news. Pete does not subscribe to this theory.

"We have to live tomorrow with John," McReynolds explains. "If John's boy gets in a minor scrape, we overlook it in print, even though that's what everyone in town is talking about."

Local names, of course, are the grist for the *Roundup's* news mill. When McReynolds quit using "canned" or ready-print pages ten years ago it was because of his conviction that a Main Street dogfight was of greater interest to Pinedale readers than a revolution halfway around the world.

Thus, when Mr. and Mrs. Wilbur Huggins were presented with twin daughters, the event was chronicled in a box atop page one. And the news often is personalized, as when Tommy Hollring enrolled at Wyoming University.

"Tommy," one sentence in the item read, "distinguished

himself in high school football and we are hoping someday to see him on the WYO. line-up."

Ione, who gathers the news, is frank about admitting that writing comes hard. She worries and frets about the most routine story, and has vowed repeatedly to take a mail course in news writing. Pete is the final authority on how an item should be written, often editing as he sets the matter on his linotype machine.

The McReynoldses dropped editorials from the *Roundup* years ago when it became increasingly more difficult to find a subject for pontificating each week. Now editorials are limited to the rare occasions when Pete believes a local situation has passed the petty-squabble stage.

One of the last times was when a rancher shot and crippled several elk which had raided his haystack, letting them hobble about helplessly for a week before notifying the authorities.

McReynolds denounced the rancher by name in a blistering editorial that was the sensation of the town. Everyone reads when Pete gets angry enough to write. The upshot was that game authorities established a winter feed ground in Sublette County to minimize further raids on ranchers' hay.

Except for the feeling of being chained to the relentless weekly demands of their newspaper, Pete and Ione McReynolds, with sons Max and Donley, are as happy with their work as any couple can expect to be.

"It's the grind," Ione declares. "No sooner is one issue out than we have to begin worrying about next week."

In their sixteen years of marriage the McReynoldses have had one two-week vacation together. They left the *Roundup* to two apprentices, and worried all the time they were gone.

Pete has had one other vacation of ten days. That was the time he printed the paper a week early and left it to Ione to fold and mail. She was in a dither all that week, hoping Pine-dale would be overtaken by nothing newsworthy. It wasn't.



## *Mountain Medicine Man*

BY EVAN EDWARDS

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Like an advancing army, Progress (with a capital P) has sent mechanized spearheads deep into the far sectors of America's last frontier. But invariably there are pockets of isolation between the spearheads where life differs little from Grandfather's day. Doc Sudan chose just such a pocket in the high Rockies in which to practice medicine. The story on his professional life is essentially the story of many other modern medicine men who voluntarily have chosen the frontier over a comfortable—and financially more rewarding—city practice.

**I**T WAS the night of September 23, 1926, and in a Philadelphia ring Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney were banging away at each other with the heavyweight boxing championship of the world in the balance.

Up in Grand County, Colorado, a group of men huddled about the telegrapher in the railroad office, listening intently as he translated the stutter of the telegraph instrument reporting the progress of the fight above the din of a raging rain- and windstorm. Among the figures in the smoke-filled little room was a tall, husky chap with sandy hair—Archer Chester

Sudan, M.D., the new doctor—who had been in the community only a few months.

During the fourth round the door of the depot burst open and a rain-soaked horseman stumbled in with the news that a rancher living thirty miles back in the hills needed Doc. The rancher had been hunting that afternoon and had accidentally wounded himself in the thigh with a shotgun. The rancher's wife had gotten him home and was trying to stop the blood with flour and towels while this neighbor rode for the doctor.

In Grand County in those days the roads into the ranches were little more than cow trails. Directions were given by "draws" and "gulches," not by miles and signposts.

Sudan hadn't learned where many of these people lived and he needed a guide. C. C. (Lum) Eastin, the Kremmling druggist, who was born and reared in the Gore Range country, volunteered.

They piled into Sudan's model-T Ford and plowed mud in low gear until 2 A.M. to reach the wounded man. Sudan administered treatment and then he and the druggist built a stretcher to be placed in the car for the patient. Then Sudan, Eastin, and the rancher and his wife started for Kremmling.

After negotiating several steep hills the car finally stalled just short of the crest of a particularly bad grade. The gears in the car locked, and there was only one thing to do—go for help. Sudan recalled that a ranch house five miles back had recently installed a telephone. So back he hiked in the dark, cold night, with ten pounds of mud on each foot weighing down his every move.

He called the garage in Kremmling, which promised to dispatch a wrecker immediately to the stalled car. Sudan walked back, at times falling because his numbed legs had no feeling after exposure to the mud, rain, and cold.

He reached the car about daylight, just as the wrecker arrived. Then the car was pulled over the hump, the gears released, and Sudan drove quickly to Kremmling.

There he changed clothes while Mrs. Sudan telephoned a Denver hospital to prepare for the wounded man. Then a doctor drove the hundred and thirty miles to Denver, where he amputated his patient's leg. Sudan saw that the man was under good care and out of danger, and then returned to Kremmling. There he learned for the first time that the great Jack Dempsey had been defeated.

Dr. Sudan couldn't have realized at the time that he would spend twenty-one eventful years in the mountain village, that there would be many more night errands through snow and cold as he served the people of that sprawling country. Nor could he foresee that twenty-two years later he would stand one night in the Music Hall at Cleveland, Ohio, and receive the American Medical Association's first gold medal award to a general practitioner for "outstanding community service."

Dr. Sudan settled in Kremmling, which then was without a doctor, quite by accident in the summer of 1926. He was teaching at the University of Chicago and had come to Colorado for a vacation.

He fished the streams about Kremmling and one day was inquiring about new fishing spots from druggist Eastin when a distraught mother hurried in.

She was Mrs. Ruth E. Kusulas. In her home on the outskirts of the village her four children lay ill of acute tonsillitis. Sudan said he would treat them.

So from his first "office," a tent pitched on the banks of the Colorado River, he ministered to the Kusulas youngsters, all of whom are now grown and have families of their own. The children improved rapidly. Others heard of the doctor's presence and came to his tent.

Sudan liked the people of that isolated, new country and they liked him. And since they needed a doctor, he decided to stay and wired the university for a year's leave. When Mrs. Sudan joined him they obtained quarters and remodeled the place into a combination home, office, and emergency hospital.

A year later he obtained a second leave from Chicago University. Eventually Dr. Sudan resigned his position and abandoned a promising career in medical research to become just a country doctor.

Archie Sudan was born at Sioux Falls, South Dakota, in 1894, son of a farmer who reared nine children. Later the family moved to Oklahoma, where Archie liked to tend sick and injured chickens and farm animals.

Deciding to study medicine, he went to Chicago to live with a married sister while attending high school. He learned the barber trade and worked his way through college. Summer harvesting in the Dakotas added to his income. In 1922 he received his B.S. degree from the University of Chicago, and his Master of Science a year later. During World War I he served with a machine-gun battalion overseas.

He entered Rush Medical College on a scholarship and was graduated in 1925. He interned at Denver General Hospital, where he met red-haired Tuleen F. Swift, of Kansas City, Missouri, a nurse. She became Mrs. Sudan. They have one son, Archer Chester Sudan, Jr., who also is studying medicine.

Dr. Sudan showed marked ability in research during his college days and did considerable work in parathyroid tetany, the effect of the removal of the parathyroid glands on body functions.

This was his background as he opened practice in Kremmling, serving families within an eighty-mile radius of the town which today has a population of 600.



Two major problems faced Dr. Sudan immediately. One concerned living and health conditions, the other weather and roads.

Residents of Kremmling and Grand County in those days had no electricity, no plumbing, and no running water. Wells were frequently near outdoor toilets. The people had little knowledge of good health practices, and proper medical care was not available.

Dr. Sudan's efforts to introduce good health measures brought about gradual improvement. He was particularly concerned about obstetrical care and insisted on prenatal examinations and good home nursing after delivery.

One year a large family in Kremmling contracted typhoid fever. Sudan obtained authority from the county commissioners for a strict quarantine, and two nurses from Denver were rushed to the scene. In spite of these efforts two patients died. The incident made a profound impression on the whole community and it was easier thereafter to obtain co-operation in improving sanitary conditions.

The transportation problem was always with Dr. Sudan. Grand County covers 1867 square miles, an area larger than the state of Rhode Island. Population is now about 3500, but was much less some years ago. Sudan's territory ranged to Fraser, an old logging town; to West Portal, near the famous Moffat Tunnel; to Granby, Grand Lake, Rand, Dillon, Eagle, Breckenridge, Sheephorn, and State Bridge.

The nearest doctor before Sudan arrived was at Steamboat Springs, fifty-seven miles distant over Rabbit Ears Pass. Some of the secondary and ranch roads were impassable during part of the year, and heavy snows often halted travel by automobile in the entire area. In fact for some years the state of Colorado charged residents less than the usual license-tag rate because they were unable to use their cars the year around.

Often while on rural calls Sudan shoveled out snowdrifts thirty or forty feet long and three to four feet deep, knowing that upon his return he would have to repeat the job as the wind would have drifted the road full again. He drove thousands of miles each year to reach patients, often traveling in thirty-below weather.

When roads were closed, the ranchers would relay him to a patient by feed sled or on horseback. Traveling those unmarked side roads was hazardous. Chains, shovels, boards, and other paraphernalia constituted standard equipment in his automobile. Once he worked seven hours to move his car sixty feet.

He wore out a car a year—even the big, powerful models equipped with special low gears which he drove in later years. By spring the fenders would be “chewed off” by frozen mud, ice, and snow knocked up under the car as he plowed drifts and bucked soft spots. He can’t even estimate how many rear ends and clutches he sent to the garage scrap pile.

Frequently he would have to travel sixty to seventy miles to reach a patient living only ten or twelve miles in a beeline from his office. Dozens of times he bogged down while coming back from a call and walked five or ten miles back home to sleep a few hours before another day.

One winter night he was called to treat a young wife “shot through the chest” in an accident on a little ranch nineteen miles in the hills. The report said she and her husband were target shooting when a .22 rifle inflicted the wound.

The doctor hurried to the mountain cabin. After driving fifteen miles on bad roads he walked the last four over snowy fields.

“Her color was good,” Sudan recalls, “too good for a person shot through the chest. I quickly ascertained that it was a freak wound. The bullet struck a rib, coursed around the

body, and came out beneath the other breast, leaving marks which to laymen would indicate she'd been badly wounded.

"When I realized she was all right it made me so happy I could have flown those four miles back to the car.

"I told her she would not die, whereupon she sat up in bed and said she was hungry. We all ate roast beaver and drank tea, then I hiked back to my car."

Once Sudan drove into the Williams Fork country in mid-winter to a rancher who was dying of pneumonia. Arrangements had been made for a "high-geared" Ford and driver to meet him. But Sudan's car got stuck and he started walking. About daylight the driver met Sudan and took him to the rancher in time to make the man's last hours comfortable.

That spring a road crew found a fountain pen near the spot where Sudan's car had been stuck. Without hesitation they took it to the doctor.

"This has to be your pen, Doc," one of them said. "No one else but you would have been back in that damn country in the winter."

For this sort of life two assets are indispensable—a rugged constitution and a sense of humor. Dr. Sudan has both. He weighs two hundred and thirty pounds and stands six feet one inch tall. He is a marvelous storyteller.

While interning in Denver, he and a colleague went on a fishing and camping trip. His companion, being a native, liked to regale Sudan with stories about Colorado's big trout.

One morning Sudan caught a good mess of ten- and twelve-inch trout, then saw against the bank across the river a huge rainbow rolling in the current. It would not take Sudan's lure. Finally Sudan threw a rock at the fish, but it didn't move. Sudan discovered the fish was dead, caught on the line of some fisherman who had lost the big fellow.

While the fish was inedible, it was well preserved, owing to

the cold water. Sudan put him in his creel, the eating fish in his jacket, and started for camp.

"How's fishing?" inquired his companion.

"Well," said Sudan, "I picked up a few little ones for supper," and he tossed the pan fish on the ground. "Where I come from we use that size for bait."

His companion protested that they were pretty fair trout.

"In fact," Sudan interjected, "I don't think there are any big fish in the stream.

"This fellow," he said with emphasis as he started pulling the big trout from his creel, "is the best I got and who the dickens wants to fool around with one no bigger than that!"

He jerked the giant from the basket and with the same motion hurled it back into the river while his companion stared. And to this day the man doesn't know it was a Sudan joke!

This big, friendly man, rugged as the mountains among which he labored, has a recipe for country doctoring:

"When a person is sick, anything you can do to add to his comfort is good medicine. Even if it is nothing more than words or smoothing a rumpled bed or washing his face."

But more than that, he believes in good medicine. "People in the country expect the same quality of medical care they can get in a city," he declares. "And a community must realize that the doctor has to have time to keep himself abreast of the times in order to deliver the type of medical care they want."

He thinks that good health and good medicine include a responsibility on the part of the community. He says:

"If a community will provide proper facilities and will co-operate for good roads, good nursing, and a good public health program, and have an understanding of a doctor's

problems and his need for time to study, more young men will practice medicine in rural areas."

While in Kremmling, Sudan was a vigorous booster for good roads. He says that years ago it was customary to "plow the rancher in." Big snowplows went down the highway and blocked side roads with huge banks of snow. Sudan argued with his county commissioners that it was good business, and good health, to have road crews open the drives, too, so that families could get out in case of emergency, not to mention going shopping.

For ten years Dr. Sudan served on the board of trustees of the Colorado State Medical Society and never missed the Denver meetings. Nor did he ever miss a session of the Northwest Colorado Medical Society, comprising the doctors of Grand, Routt, Jackson, and Moffat counties, meeting at Steamboat Springs.

In addition to taking postgraduate courses at the Universities of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, he attended national medical meetings and clinics and read fifteen medical journals, averaging two hours' reading daily.

Sudan's record is one of loyalty and unselfish devotion, and to his people in the wide-open spaces of Grand County he has left a heritage of good medical care, improved sanitation, home nursing, and health. A fifteen-bed hospital which he built in 1934 is now operated by a community board of trustees and incorporated as the Middle Park Hospital. For fourteen years he was a member of the school board, and for several years he was county health officer.

A friend once asked Sudan how he felt about forgoing a research career.

"I think I've done a lot of research in terms of people, better health, better communities, and better lives," was his response.

To the people of the hills and valleys in the shadows of the

beautiful Gore Range Doc Sudan was not only the family doctor, he was their friend and counselor and father confessor. They came to him with their problems, sought his advice on many things. The children loved him.

A Kremmling mother wrote Sudan to congratulate him on the American Medical Association award. She also reported: "Johnny will not take any nose drops except those prescribed by Dr. Sudan. Fortunately, I have a large bottle on hand."

His hobbies are still hunting, fishing, and storytelling. He is a crack shot with pistol and rifle. An expert horseman, he loves to pack into the back country, where his skill as a cook is famed. His cronies on these trips include the Knorr brothers, Karl and George, ranchers; Mark Hinman, another rancher; druggist Eastin; and Carl Breeze, banker.

Both Dr. and Mrs. Sudan are inordinately modest, but she excels him. Tuleen Sudan in those twenty-one years at Kremmling carried a tremendous responsibility at home and later at the hospital while Sudan was off on those long, weary treks.

Sudan felt that Grand County was a young man's country even before World War II, and made tentative plans to move to Denver for general practice and research. The hardships of two decades had taken their toll and he foresaw the need for quieter pursuits. But the war changed his plans and he stayed on as duty dictated.

Then in 1945 he was chosen president-elect of the Colorado State Medical Society, a signal honor for a rural doctor and one which Sudan knew reflected credit on all in the general practice field. So he stayed on to serve as president from September 1946 to September 1947. Then he made his plans to move. The hospital he built was in capable hands, and young Dr. Ernest G. Ceriani, with an excellent record, had taken up practice in Kremmling.

So Doc Sudan came over the familiar mountain passes into

Denver, bought an apartment house, began getting an office in readiness, and looked forward to taking it a bit easy.

But back in Cleveland the American Medical Association's house of delegates was considering nominations for "family doctor of the year," to go to the general practitioner who had done the most for his community.

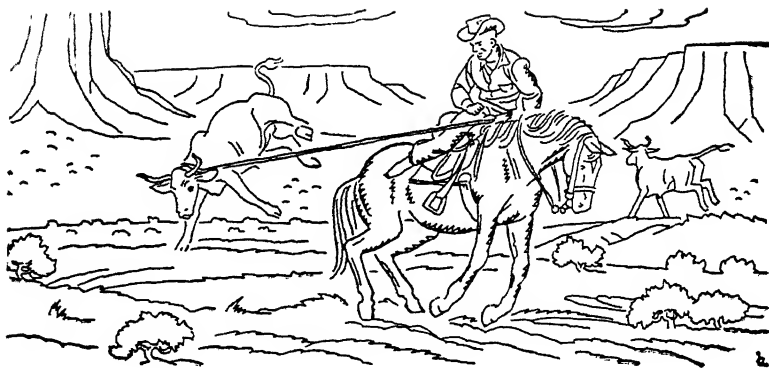
The Colorado Society had nominated Sudan, but there were 179 others in the field, from every state. One of the Colorado delegation telephoned Sudan's Denver home to tell him he was in the "finals." But he wasn't home—he was back in Kremmling.

An old friend at Kremmling had fallen ill and had insisted on having Doc Sudan, who, suffering from laryngitis, beset with moving problems, and knowing he might win top medical honors, nevertheless had jumped into his car and driven a hundred and thirty miles to see a sick pal.

Mrs. Sudan finally got him back to Denver and on a plane for his first aerial trip. At Cleveland, the night of January 7, 1948, he received the gold medal for outstanding community service. He insisted he didn't deserve it, but took it because it was a symbol of the great work of all country doctors.

When he left Denver that chilly night, headed for the highest honor ever to come to a general practitioner, he wore the big pile coat his wife and son had given him years before up in Kremmling.

It had been "made special" in Denver. You couldn't buy one big enough and warm enough for a two-hundred-and-thirty-pound doctor who walked through the mountains in subzero weather, who never failed the call of duty.



## *King of the Steer Ropers*

BY FRANKLIN REYNOLDS

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The pay is pretty fair. Toots Mansfield made \$17,500 for 101.8 seconds' work. But as a steady thing, steer roping is a somewhat hazardous way of making a living. The wherefores of the profession are related by Franklin Reynolds, Texas and New Mexico newspaperman, horse breeder, and authoritative spinner of the Southwest's historical yarns.

ON LABOR DAY, 1947, at Clovis, New Mexico, Toots Mansfield, a tall, blue-eyed west Texas cowboy, rode down, lassoed, tripped, threw, and tied five wild 1000-pound Mexican steers in 101.8 seconds' elapsed time. For this feat he was paid \$17,500.

That was more money than any other cowboy ever won in any single contest. It was as much money as many another west Texas cowboy has worked as long as fifty years to earn.

To the people of the cow country Mansfield's earnings in this event are indicative of the fact that steer roping is enjoying the greatest popularity it ever has known. Thousands of ranchers and cowboys traveled hundreds of miles, and hundreds of ranchers and cowboys traveled thousands of miles,



to witness that performance, and another like it, but on a smaller scale, at Levelland, Texas, the day before. Heretofore, two thousand dollars was probably the most ever won by a participant in a steer roping.

Mansfield roped against ten other top steer ropers—Everett Shaw, of Stonewall, Oklahoma; Cotton Lee, of Fort Summer, New Mexico; Ike Rude, of Dodge City, Kansas; Pete Grubb, of Florence, Arizona; Jiggs Burke, of Comanche, Oklahoma; Carl Arnold, of Buckeye, Arizona; Gerald Tully, of Hondo, New Mexico; King Merritt, of Federal, Wyoming; Joe Bassett, of Mesa, Arizona; and Jeff Good, of Yeso, New Mexico.

The show, witnessed by fifteen thousand spectators in a country where the population runs one person to every quarter section, was staged by Homer Bennett, of Clovis. Each contestant paid an entrance fee of a thousand dollars, the winner taking all plus one third of the gate receipts. Each roper tackled five steers, and the best total time won.

Before we go any further, keep in mind that the only similarity between steer roping and calf roping is that a man riding a horse tosses his rope over another animal. The resemblance ends at that point.

In the steer-roping contests wild Mexican and Texas brush country animals weighing from a thousand to twelve hundred pounds are used. They are as fast as they are wild and they must have a horn spread of at least thirty inches from tip to tip. They must be roped around these horns.

Once the loop settles in place, the horse does not stop and suddenly tighten the rope as in calf roping. The horse, instead, turns quickly and runs away from the steer, the idea being that when the rope jerks taut the steer will go down hard, and stay down.

Sometimes the steer also takes the horse down with him

and the rider is thrown into the dust. This is exactly what happened to Jeff Good on his first steer at Clovis.

But if the steer goes down as intended the horse continues dragging his victim until the rider is satisfied the animal is down to stay. It is only then that the rider jumps from his saddle and runs back to tie the steer's legs, with the horse keeping the rope tight all the while.

If the steer does not go down the contestant must ride around the animal's rear (and the steer may be moving at the time) and drop the rope, one end secure at the steer's horns and the other end secure at the saddle horn, low around the steer's hind legs.

The roper then suddenly spurs his horse. The steer is tripped—up he goes and down he goes—and is then dragged until the desire to regain his feet has been pretty well worked out of him. If the steer regains his feet at any time before being tied the roper must climb back into the saddle and try another trip and throw. These steers are never thrown by the cowboy taking the horns and wrestling them to the ground as in bulldogging.

Strangely, not many animals are injured. One reason is that most contests are in arenas with sandy soil, which is loose and shock-absorbing.

Coming out of the chute, the steer is given a start of thirty feet. The horse must not be in forward motion until the drop of the flag, signaling that the steer has crossed the starting line. From then on things happen fast. For example, Mansfield won the Clovis contest by an average time of 20.36 seconds on each steer!

To get a better idea of just what happens, climb on an imaginary roping horse and time yourself for twenty-one seconds. Let's go.

You're astride your horse in a chute next to that confining

the steer. Your horse trembles in anticipation. You check your rope and other gear. You nod to the man at the chute gate that you're ready.

Suddenly the steer is thirty feet ahead. The flag drops and you touch your horse with the spurs. He's a quarter horse and is in full stride on the third jump. You're racing forward, whirling your rope. Your horse takes the proper position to the left and behind the steer.

You throw your loop and see it settle over the horns. Simultaneously your horse answers your knee pressure (he's been watching that loop too) and turns. You look to see that neither your horse nor yourself will be fouled in the rope, which suddenly tightens with the steer's half-ton weight and tremendous strength as he hits the end of it.

The steer is turning, rolling over in the air on a level with your saddle, then he hits the ground on his side, hard. You hear him grunt. You touch the horse with the spurs again and he strains forward, dragging the roped animal—it's a slow, hard pull, and you're twisted in your saddle to avoid being cut by the rope and to watch the steer.

You jump from your saddle, pulling your piggin' string from your belt. The horse stops. He has dragged the steer up to you. Careful that the downed animal's struggles do not kick you unconscious, you grab a foreleg and the two hind legs and tie them securely together so the steer cannot rise.

You come to your feet and throw both hands into the air, signaling the tie. Now you look back toward the chute from which you started. You see it's four or five hundred feet or more back there. You've done it all in twenty-one seconds!

And remember this—cowboys have, under good conditions, cut this time by several seconds.

Toots was conspicuous at the show by being the only Texan entered. This bears explanation in view of the Texas boast of

having more good cowboys than any other state. In eighteen years a Texan has been named world's champion calf roper six times. Five of these times it was Mansfield.

Steer-roping contests are prohibited by Texas law. This legislation, it is unnecessary to remark, no more keeps a loop from being tossed over a steer's horns than other laws keep pistols and whisky bottles out of Texans' hip pockets. The law, however, is respected to the extent that steer roping is rarely ever featured on regular Texas rodeo programs.

The statute was enacted back about the turn of the century because too many steers were having their horns knocked off and legs and necks broken. No humane society had anything to do with the passage of the law. It was passed at the demand of the cowmen themselves!

It was almost every early-day cowboy's ambition to become the champion steer roper of Texas, to pocket the winnings, and consequently to become more attractive to the women-folks. The only way to acquire the necessary skill was through practice, and so he practiced and trained his horse on the cattle in the herds with which he worked. The bosses were paying rather expensively for the steer-roping educations, because steer roping is rough, particularly on the steers.

Fifty years ago shipping trained roping horses by train to the contests wasn't practiced in Texas. Too often the contests were held some distances from the steel rails. Consequently the contestants just rode through the unfenced country. Across this open country grazed many steers.

The result was inevitable. The more steers the ropers saw, no matter on whose property, the more they practiced, and the more they practiced, the more broken horns, legs, and necks resulted. Steer ropers could be trailed for hundreds of miles by the dead and crippled steers in their wake.

Cattlemen finally appealed to the legislature, admitting

they had met one range problem that was too big for them to handle.

So it came to pass that legally steer roping was prohibited. Certain localities didn't hear about the new law and steer roping continued. The law has never been enforced. The cowboys also found a loophole. All they had to do was brand the steer when they finished tying him and the contest became regular range work. But since steer roping hasn't been as general in Texas as in some of the other states, Texas hasn't developed as many good steer ropers.

Mansfield, the king of them all, is a gracious, friendly, courteous cowboy in his early thirties. There is a quiet, simple dignity about him. He is married to a Texas ranch girl.

Toots already has become something of a legend among the home folk. You can curse the Texas heat, the rattlesnakes, the dust, Pappy O'Daniel, even Tom Connally. But Toots Mansfield stands with John Garner, and one word that ain't nice about him and you'd better be fast on the draw.



## *Lady Jack-Whacker*

BY FRED GIPSON

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Western history is well peopled by stouthearted women who donned a pair of britches in an emergency and stepped in to do a man's job. No compulsion entered into Olga Schaaf's decision to make her living by driving donkey trains into the high Rockies, but for thirty years this woman freighted supplies up to regions too tough for her masculine colleagues. Now past sixty, Olga has retired to the comfort of a kitchen.

**I**N THE La Plata Mountains of southwestern Colorado six elderly "Rocky Mountain canaries" live in a paradise as near to burro heaven as one woman could imagine and prepare it.

They graze in lush pastures. They drink the sweet, cold waters of melted snows. They doze in shady aspen groves. They bray, and the echoing mountains broadcast their songs. When winter shuts down they're warmly quartered and fed the best of grain. And almost never do they have to work!

These fortunate burros are Jiggs, Jim, Nig, Blue, Janet, and Mutt—the retired remnants of the most extraordinary train ever to operate in the Rocky Mountain mining region. For

their owner is the only woman jack-whacker in the West—possibly the only one in the world.

Olga Schaaf (now Mrs. W. C. Little, of May Day, Colorado) operated her pack train out of Durango back in the boom days of gold and silver mining, delivering supplies to miners high up in the La Plata Range.

The trails were steep and perilous. Often they were nothing more than foot-wide traces clinging to the faces of sheer canyon walls. In winter the trails might be buried under ten feet of snow. During the spring breakup they might cross rushing torrents that could sweep away man or burro. Many of the trails led above timber line.

Yet for thirty years this compact little gray-eyed woman led her heavily laden train of burros to wherever mine operators needed supplies.

Miners declare that they have seen Olga contract to deliver supplies into high and remote regions where veteran men packers refused to go. The men were appalled by the stupendous labor and personal risk involved. Olga, however, took the contracts and fulfilled them to the last letter.

Now, past sixty and retired from work, Olga looks back on her years as a packer with the attitude of a woman who's spent her life at cooking, sewing, and house cleaning. Operating a pack train was a job; Olga did it to the best of her ability.

Pressed for particulars, Olga can recollect a mishap or so that was a bit out of the ordinary. For instance there was the night she spent on a high mountain pass leading up to the Neglected mine.

It was late winter. Some of the passes, up high where the spruce grows, were blocked with twenty feet of drifted snow. Even the steep slopes sometimes had seven or eight feet. But the trail to the Neglected had been used daily and the snow

was well packed. The long string of pack animals plodded steadily along, nose to tail, following Olga, who was astride a mountain horse.

The horse was sure-footed and accustomed to the trail. Yet in rounding the high shoulder of a mountain, the animal's feet slipped on the ice. He floundered, started scrambling for footholds.

Instantly Olga flung herself out of the saddle—uphill from the horse. She landed on hands and knees in the narrow trail in time to see her horse go tumbling end over end for a thousand feet down the precipitous slope.

Hurriedly tying up her pack train, so the burros would be safe, Olga picked her way down into the gorge. There she found her horse buried deep in the snow. Although skinned all over and shaken, the animal was apparently uninjured, the deep snow having cushioned his fall. But now he was trapped in the hole that his falling body had dented in the deep snow.

Olga went to work, trying to get the horse out. But digging with gloved hands in old crusted snow is slow work. After laboring for hours, Olga gave it up. She'd have to get help.

Night was coming on with its lowering temperature. Left there in the snow, without food or protection, the horse was almost certain to freeze before morning. So Olga climbed hurriedly back up the mountain and sacked part of a bale of hay in blankets. Slinging the load over her shoulder, she again descended the icy slope.

Darkness had come by the time she'd climbed back up the mountain a second time. But down in the gorge her horse was wrapped in blankets and had enough hay to last him until morning.

To continue the pack trip now would have been foolhardy, and Olga had traversed the mountains too long to take foolish



risks. There was nothing to do but stay all night where she was.

Many women—and some men—faced with the prospect of spending the night alone in this wilderness of ice and snow, would have been frantic with fear. To Olga it was merely an annoying delay.

Olga relieved her burros of their packs and made them as comfortable as possible. Then she went about building a fire of spruce logs and cooking supper.

Finally she dug a hole back into a bank of snow and crawled into it with her blankets, where she slept comfortably while the icy wind moaned in the spruce tops.

Next morning Olga continued her trip up to the mine, leading her burros afoot, and got help to get her horse out of the gorge.

Although the start of Olga's remarkable career as a packer was more or less accidental, her early training and background had well fitted her for the job. Born in Germany, she came with her immigrant parents to Colorado as a baby.

Her parents, farmers in search of land, first settled on a homestead in Phillips County, near Holyoke, later moved by covered wagon to Chama, New Mexico, finally settling in Durango about 1898.

During all this time Olga was learning with her brothers how to break horses and rope cattle. By the time she was seventeen she and her brother Alvin were breaking and training young horses for ranchers.

In Durango Olga started driving livery teams, taking tourists into the mountains for fishing, delivering groceries in a hack occasionally to several of the mines.

In the spring of 1909 floods in the mountains washed out several of the roads and most of the bridges. Frank Rivers was in need of groceries at the Rivers and Gorman Ruby mine up

Junction Creek. Since the roads were all gone and men for hire were scarce, Rivers asked Olga if she would take supplies up to the Ruby on pack horses.

Olga explained that she knew nothing about packing or managing a pack train. But Rivers brushed that aside. "I'll do your packing," he persisted. "You can surely take the horses up to the mine and bring them back."

That afternoon she led her first pack train out of Durango. It was night when she arrived at the Ruby. There were no accommodations for a girl, so Olga sat up all night with one of the mine superintendents and started back at daylight.

By noon she was so sleepy that she pulled her pack horses off the trail a little way below the Neglected mine. There she slept a few hours in a grove of pines. Hardly had she got her horses back on the trail again when along came John Ball, superintendent of the Neglected.

"You running a pack outfit?" Ball wanted to know.

Olga told him that she wasn't, that she'd merely been helping Frank Rivers get some supplies up to the Ruby.

"Well, you could run a pack outfit, couldn't you?" Ball insisted. "I'm having a devil of a time getting supplies up here to the Neglected. Can't hire anybody to do it."

"But I don't know anything about it," Olga said. "I can't tie hitches or anything."

"I'll get Jess Eckert to show you all about that," Ball argued. "He used to be a packer."

By the time Ball was through talking—and without quite knowing how it happened—Olga started back to Durango with a three-year contract to pack in and out for the Neglected.

She learned a lot that first year, most of it from the veteran Jess. She learned to throw a box or a sack hitch with the best of them. She learned that with a pack outfit you never tied a hard and fast knot with your sling ropes. Everything was slipknots,

even to the pigtail ropes that led from the cantle of a pack-saddle back to the halter of the animal just behind.

Thus, in an emergency, it took only a moment or so to drop the packs from every animal in the train and free them from each other.

Olga soon learned, too, that for mountain-trail packing the little chunky, sure-footed burro was far superior to a horse. Although hardly half as large as a horse, the burro could pack approximately the same loads with less effort and fatigue.

So Olga soon switched to burros, then learned to name each burro and keep his name on his packsaddle. That way, the saddles would never get switched. For a burro's packsaddle had to be form-fitting, else it chafed his back and ruined him for work.

All these tricks of the trade, and many more, Olga learned early in the game, so that soon she was able to deliver her supplies and pack ore back down to the smelter with all the speed and efficiency of a veteran man packer.

The loads might consist of anything from dismantled mine machinery to the corpse of a miner who'd died before he could be carried out to a doctor. On the way up it was usually an assortment of groceries, lumber, joints of piping, boxes of dynamite, or possibly drilling tools.

On the way back it was almost invariably silver or gold ore to be delivered to the smelter.

That a girl should take on a job too strenuous and risky for many men never seemed remarkable to Olga. And if the town women gossiped about a lone girl packing into the mountains where all she could expect to encounter were wild animals and rough, rowdy miners, Olga was too busy to hear or be concerned about it.

She had the strength and judgment necessary for the job. She knew that any bear or mountain lion she met on the trail

would run from her as quickly as she'd run from it. And as for the rowdy miners, Olga had always worked among men and knew how to get along with them.

There were some risks of course. Now and then even a burro would lose his footing on a narrow trail ledge and plunge to his death maybe two thousand feet below.

Going through Eagle Pass once, she lost three burros loaded with crates of dynamite. The fall killed the burros, but only broke open the crates and scattered sticks of dynamite all over the mountain.

There was the time in 1911 when Olga and sixteen miners got snowed in at the Neglected. At an elevation of 10,000 feet, the snow can sometimes pile up to unbelievable depths. That's what happened this time. The thermometer hung around thirty degrees below zero for days.

Olga and the miners could have waited it out comfortably enough, except that the food began to run short on the second day. They did have lots of oatmeal. But it takes a pile of oatmeal to feed seventeen people three times a day and some twenty-five burros at least once every twenty-four hours. And that's what Olga's burros ate. There was nothing else to feed them.

At the end of five days all the oatmeal was gone. Now somebody had to get out, else they'd all starve.

Olga suggested that they try to reach the Transfer mine. It was only seven miles across the mountains, and there might be food there.

Eleven of the men elected to try it with her. They put pack-saddles on the burros, and Olga saddled her horse.

But seven miles through snowdrifts sometimes ten feet deep can be a long way. The cold was killing. On the downgrades they had to tie bundles of wood behind the horse and the burros. The bundles dragged heavily in the deep snow, acting

as brakes to check the animals as they plunged down the steep inclines.

Some of the men gave out, and Olga had to prod them harshly to keep them on the move. She knew they'd freeze to death if they ever stopped. They weren't used to the cold and hardship of such travel, as Olga was. They'd spent too much of their time underground, where they weren't exposed.

It took the party from daylight until eleven o'clock that night to reach the Transfer. And there the only food they found was crackers and eggs.

But when you're hungry enough, crackers and eggs can be mighty filling. Olga says that midnight meal she got in the Transfer was one of the best she ever had.

Only five of the men had the courage to follow Olga back to the Neglected with enough crackers and eggs loaded on her burros to last the other miners until she could get out and bring them more supplies.

In 1913 Olga married W. C. (Bill) Little, a miner who had been trying to talk her into the notion ever since he'd gone to work for the Neglected in 1910. Immediately Olga went to work making a packer out of him. Bill soon caught on.

They increased the size of their pack train to forty burros. Together, in the following twenty-five years, they packed for just about every mine in the La Platas—the Mountain Lily, the Neglected, Western Bell, Black Diamond, Kaibob, Lucky Four, Luck Moon, May Day, Bessie G., Idaho, and many others.

Olga and Bill came to know every trail in the mountains, every miner and mineowner, almost every bear and elk that inhabited the higher slopes. They worked hard, saved their money, and put it into a five-hundred-acre ranch at the mouth of La Plata Canyon, some five miles from Hesperus. They built their home there, taking care of the ranch in between pack trips.

It was the coming of World War II, with the shutting down of the mines, that finally closed out their business. Possibly it was just as well. Bill's heart had begun to give him some trouble at high altitudes, and Olga was no longer the young, vigorous woman she'd once been. Also Bill had become interested in the cutting and mounting of semiprecious stones and was looking for an excuse to set up shop and go into the gem business.

The war gave him that chance and he has turned their canyon home into a veritable treasure house of Indian jewelry, precious and semiprecious stones, most of which Bill has cut and mounted himself. The jewelry sells at good prices to tourists.

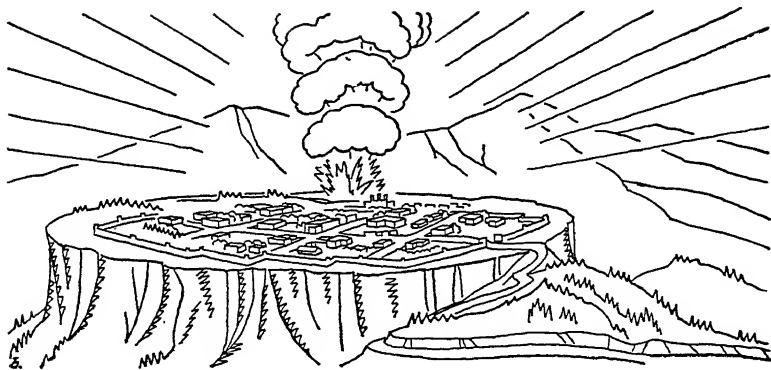
Olga occasionally saddles up her remaining burros and packs into the mountains for some hunter or prospector. On the whole, however, she is now catching up on all the cooking and dishwashing and house cleaning she missed out on during her thirty-year career as a packer.

Now and then she is called on to bring her pack burros and ride in some town parade, dressed in her jeans, laced boots, and big hat—just as she used to ride the pack trails. In 1939 she attended the sowbelly dinner of the Colorado Mining Association in Denver—one of few women ever officially invited to that famous and exclusive blowout.

Recently Olga and Bill sold most of their ranch, keeping only enough for Olga to be certain that her retired burros would always have pasture.

"They're nearly all gone now," she points out. "And the ones I've got left are past twenty. But some of them will live to be forty, and I mean to take care of them until they die—or I die. They helped to take care of me and Bill for a long time."

She paused a moment and then added: "I only wish I could have done the same for all the others I owned before these."



## *Life with the Bomb*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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For a long time during the war even the existence of Los Alamos, New Mexico, was secret. Then, when the miracle of the atomic bomb became known, reporters flocked to Los Alamos and other atomic installations to write with awe and philosophic wonder, or with scientific detachment, of what little they were permitted to see of the atomic energy program. Now here is a glimpse into the human side of life with the bomb. (Condensed from a series of five outstanding *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine stories.)

SINCE knowledge of the atomic bomb became public, residents of the serrated valley northwest of Santa Fe, New Mexico, have never felt quite at ease about the sharp thunder of explosives that rolls down the steep wooded flanks of the Jemez Mountains.

Up there on the Hill is Los Alamos—the mystery city fenced in on a mesa. There, in the words of the Atomic Energy Commission, the A bomb is “fabricated.”

Official explanation for the explosions is twofold: construction crews are using dynamite, and scientists are touching off blasts of their own to study things like shock waves.

But once in a while the booming is followed by a junior-size Bikini smoke mushroom climbing menacingly into the azure New Mexico sky. That's when the phones begin to clamor in the public and technical information offices at Los Alamos.

There's a stock reply for the anxious queries: "No, you don't need an atom bomb to set off a mushroom. No, you shouldn't be alarmed. But if you call up someday and don't get an answer, brother, start running."

Any preconceived notions that Los Alamos is a colony of myopic and unbarbered scientific nuts pursuing single-purpose lives are quickly blasted by even a casual visit. Here are entirely normal if talented people intensely interested in their work and the world about them.

There is, of course, an abnormally high percentage of academic accomplishment. Out of a total population of 9000, Los Alamos has perhaps one hundred Ph.D.s and five hundred men and women with various kinds of Masters' degrees. Not long ago a Ph.D. in biochemistry, a man in his early forties with a family, admitted he couldn't understand what was going on and took a leave of absence to study for an M.D.

Top salaries are around twelve thousand dollars, shared by doctors in the town hospital and upper-echelon administrators. Scientific brains reportedly draw a maximum in the neighborhood of ten thousand, with the city-wide income close to thirty-five hundred. This is more than double the national average.

Inasmuch as everyone who comes to work in Los Alamos has been investigated by the FBI, the make-up of the population differs from that of other towns. For instance there is no local drunk, no town idiot, no vagrants and other suspicious characters. Nuclear fission is a young man's game; the average age is about thirty.

People don't talk about what goes on behind the security



barriers, but they are quick to declare Los Alamos has probably the world's finest physics labs.

Yet much irreplaceable equipment has been housed in flimsy wooden barracks-type structures that were a fireman's nightmare. One building, according to reports penetrating the iron fence, had seven lean-to shacks added to it as the need for space increased, and one of these parasite shacks had still another shack growing wartlike out of its unlovely sides.

This seemingly unplanned expansion only reflected the growth of the entire atomic energy program. From an initial wartime appropriation of six thousand dollars to explore the mysteries of nuclear fission, spending long since passed three and a half billion dollars. Los Alamos itself was first planned to house some thirty scientists and their families; by 1952, some ten years since its unheralded birth, its population is expected to reach 12,000.

Every worker wears an identification card carrying his photograph and a series of code numbers. Each number indicates an area to which the cardholder may be admitted, a long string of digits signifying an important person who has been probed and found pure.

This has brought about a caste system with some of the multicolor boys insisting on wearing their badges of distinction after hours, a practice frowned on by the security people.

Los Alamosans can be divided into three groups. At the top of the scale are the scientists and technicians, employed by the University of California, which operates the laboratories under a non-profit contract. In the final analysis, Los Alamos exists solely to give them a place to work.

In the middle are employees of the Atomic Energy Commission whose duties are mainly administrative. And at the foot are those who work for Zia, a private corporation set up to provide the town's physical needs. Zia builds and maintains

homes and streets, pumps the water, sweeps out the offices. Zia is paid seventeen thousand dollars a month for administering the services which cost Uncle Sam ten million dollars a year.

Physicists may be the most important people in town but Zia workmen subscribe to a less complimentary evaluation. "A physicist," they say, "is a man who can tell you exactly why a doorbell won't work, but can't fix it."

When the Los Alamos housewife wants to buy an aspirin, an airplane ticket, a washing machine, shoes for her family, get her watch repaired or clothes cleaned, purchase a money order or bank the month's savings, or see a movie, bowl, drink a milk shake or have her hair curled, she heads for the four-million-dollar Community Center. Here collectively is the creation of architects who were told to junk tradition, let imagination fly uninhibited, and produce a shopping center in the best futuristic design.

The result is a small wonderland of flat-topped, blocky, stone and stucco buildings in which chrome, stainless steel, fluorescent lights, and plate glass find lavish use.

To come upon not one store but an entire shopping area of this design—atop an isolated mesa thirty-five miles from the nearest railroad—is more than slightly startling. The familiar old beans somehow take on elegance under batteries of softly modulated lights. Two walls of the town cafeteria are glass, the kitchens flooded with brilliance from skylights. Cubicles of the beauty shop are separated by translucent fluted glass that combines maximum privacy, light, and air, but perhaps a minimum of opportunity to pick up the news.

The severe hospital-white, supersanitary enameled appearance of the combination bakery-delicatessen is tempered by the pleasantly old-fashioned aroma of fresh-baked pastries, something which plays no small part in its popularity. The

barbershop is plush enough to make the ordinary patron self-conscious. Chairs are chrome-trimmed and finished in pastel leathers, the walls under the mirrors paneled in black glass. One widely traveled observer remarked he hadn't seen the like this side of the Waldorf. Even the bowling alley takes on a genteel air with indirect lighting, sound-muffling ceilings, and opera-type chairs for spectators.

In this wonderland the housewife is served by some two-score concessionaires who pay AEC a percentage of their gross income for the privilege of renting space and equipment and doing business. The turnover in 1948 amounted to nearly four million dollars; in 1949, five and a half million.

While Los Alamosans like to show off Community Center, they complain that prices have been too high and choice of merchandise limited. The loudest outcries arise over food prices. Housewives declare prices in the two large, neat supermarkets on occasion have been as much as thirty per cent higher than those advertised by Denver stores. They get a bargain, though, in the ultramodern, 1000-seat Center Theater, which shows first-run films before Denver and charges only forty-five cents, tax included.

On the second point, Mrs. Atomic Scientist, shopping for a hat or dress, is stymied if she doesn't find the creation of her heart's desire in the ladies' apparel shop. There just isn't another place down the street to which she can hustle off, and no one can be quite so unhappy as a woman who can't explore a half dozen other stores before she returns to the original one for her purchase.

Since most Los Alamosans are in the family-enlarging age brackets, it is a well-worn quip that the city should be better known for its output of babies than for bombs. No less than 1300 pupils are enrolled in the first twelve grades. Another 1400 children, still too young for a formal lick at the three Rs,

assure School Superintendent F. Robert Wegner of a plentiful supply of raw material for some time to come.

The bright-eyed offspring of scientists, many of them near-geniuses, often are more than a match for their teachers. At the Mesa School a teacher was explaining thunder to a first-grade class when one of her tiny pupils raised his hand and said: "I'm sorry, but I think you're mistaken. The correct explanation is . . ." And he proceeded to give a lucid if somewhat technical account. The teacher hurried to a reference book and found the lad was right in every respect.

Principal Sam Miles of Mesa School has a motto that he picked up somewhere in his reading. It says: "My general conclusion is that genius is common, and the circumstances fitted to develop it very rare." His aim is to turn out alert, well-rounded children and not necessarily mental wizards.

In a second-grade classroom a booth has been set up for a cashier, and shelves are stocked with empty cartons of cereals and soap, empty tins of fruits, vegetables, and soups with labels intact. Some of the pupils are shoppers. Others don aprons and paper hats and become clerks. They play store right there in class. Playing store is a lesson in addition, in the monetary system, and in vocabulary development. It's fun, it's practical, and it's educational.

Pupils get access to typewriters in the second grade, to adding machines soon thereafter. If a child shows special interest he is given further instruction. Many fourth-graders type their compositions.

Miles says: "Typewriters and adding machines are common tools of living. Let the children get acquainted with them. Even if a second-grader doesn't learn to use a typewriter, it helps him learn the alphabet, aids him with his spelling and word recognition."

Miles places strong emphasis on what used to be called

manual training. Even first-graders have a shop period when they hammer and saw vigorously and noisily, dressed in smocks made of their fathers' discarded shirts. The more adept are allowed to use a power jig saw, a sight somewhat disconcerting to those who never have associated small fry with machinery.

"The impression has got around that manual arts are for retarded children," Miles declares. "We've found that the higher the intelligence, the more creative the child can be." Instead of using new lumber, industrial arts classes learn to be practical by picking out discarded materials from Zia's scrap piles.

One popular school-wide project is the production of movies. The children work out scripts, act and direct the parts, and film the action. One movie showed safe and unsafe ways to use playground equipment. "The projects get the children to thinking," Miles explains. "That's the most important part. The student council works out the points to be emphasized in the film. Class discussions are held. And then there's the fun of acting the film out, then viewing the finished product."

Whiz-kids are rarely permitted to skip a grade because it is felt they aren't capable, either physically or emotionally, of competing against older children. "We take care of our more able pupils," Miles says, "by giving them additional research—encouraging them to go deeper into their studies. Our small classes, averaging twenty-five, enable teachers to give more time to slower pupils." Not infrequently a child is held back a grade if it is believed best for his all-around development.

The health research laboratory, long housed in four beat-up Army barracks off in a disordered corner of Los Alamos down by the truck lot, is the only scientific installation open to the public. It is directed by a wiry, dark-eyed biochemist, Dr. Wright Langham, thirty-seven. He is a man of great patience,

especially with bewildered reporters who find high school science thoroughly inadequate for understanding, much less interpreting, the work that is going on.

With the magic of radioactive isotopes, intensive research is proceeding at Los Alamos into a variety of multisyllabic sciences: biochemistry, radiography, radiobiology. Doctors of medicine, dentists, chemists, physicists, and electronic technicians work at adjoining benches. The techniques and discoveries developed here are considered a largess to be shared with other scientists in the hope of speeding the arrival of mankind's bright new day.

"We must know more about radiation burns before atomic power can be made usable," Dr. Langham declares. "We must learn what can be done medically when someone gets burned. A radiation dose of four to five hundred roentgens (a unit of radiation) is deadly now; if we could invent something to raise the danger point even to five to six hundred roentgens, think what it would mean in atomic war defense, or safety in the industrial use of atomic power!"

Los Alamos' isolation and peculiar legal status has fostered in many residents a sense of being lost, neglected, and unwanted. Soon after it was ruled that New Mexico's reservation Indians would be permitted to vote, Los Alamosans were denied the ballot because they, like the residents of the District of Columbia, were on federal land. About the same time they were told they must buy the more costly non-resident licenses if they wished to fish in New Mexico, even though they were subject to state taxes.

Resentment over the issue sired an idea that was born of boredom. Los Alamos would secede from New Mexico and ask to be annexed to Texas. Petitions circulated about town quickly gathered a thousand signatures and for a few days "Hiya, Tex," was the password. This incident helped to bring

about the formation of a Los Alamos County under New Mexico jurisdiction.

The isolation, and perhaps the tension of work, are blamed in part for the heavy drinking that goes on in the atomic city. Sale of alcoholic beverages was voted down by referendum, but clubs sell beer and wines and provide a locker and mixing service for hard drinks. The bartender at the top-crust Civic Club has been heard to mutter of a Sunday night:

"One of these fine Monday mornings a scientist with a hang-over is going to push the wrong button on a reactor and blow us all to hell."

A thoroughly unconfirmed report has it that the nuclear physicist's favorite cocktail is a teaspoon of plutonium dissolved in a jigger of sulphuric acid.

Community morale was given a big boost when Carco Air Service of Albuquerque, a contract flier for the Atomic Energy Commission, was permitted to carry unofficial passengers. The planes put Los Alamosans within thirty minutes of a city of 100,000 and helped to ease the feeling of being stuck up in nowhere.

Carco flies six round trips daily between Albuquerque and Los Alamos with three-passenger Beechcraft Bonanzas that land handily on the atom city's 3500-foot-long cliff-girt strip. If more than three passengers show up, another Bonanza is put into service. Since most of the passengers are scientists with extensive atomic know-how, Carco can claim to carry more brains per route mile than any other air line.

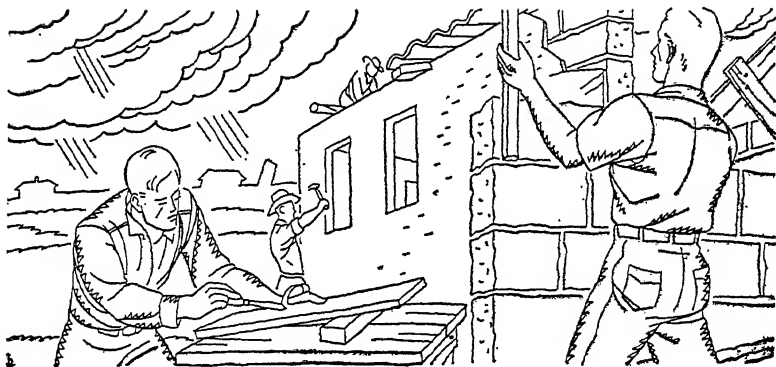
One of the questions visiting writers ask most frequently at Los Alamos has to do with "guilt complex." How do scientists feel about helping to make a weapon that someday may wipe out a hundred thousand human souls at a blow? Dr. Frederick Reines, who has been at Los Alamos since its early days, declares:

"I often ask myself why I'm here trying to figure new ways of killing people. I always arrive at the same conclusion: making a nation strong means making it powerful for anything it wants to do, peaceful as well as warlike. We as a nation gain nothing by being weak, much by being strong. The people here are hoping desperately that discoveries incidental to production of atomic weapons will yield more good than all the evil that may result from the use of those bombs."

Like many other scientists, Reines fears congressional alarmists, "who wouldn't know an atom if they were bitten by one," are hurting the program. Their approach to the security problem is typified, to him, by a woman who arrived at Los Alamos not long ago as an investigator for a congressional committee.

As she bustled about she noticed workmen spreading crushed white gravel over a street, then rolling it down. Presently a tank truck poured sticky black oil over the gravel. The woman was outraged. Seizing the nearest telephone, she registered shrill protests over desecration of a fine white gravel roadway. Finally she was referred to the engineer in charge, who with admirable restraint explained: "Lady, that's the only way to make an oiled road. I can't help it if the rocks get dirty."





## *The Man Who Saved Union County*

BY ELVON L. HOWE

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Alarmists who bewail the passing of the traditional American self-reliance may do well to consider the story of this embattled New Mexico community and the dynamic rancher-schoolteacher who pointed the way in which Union County, by digging hard into its own material and human resources, converted black disaster into a triumph. The author, who first found and published this story, still speaks of it as "the most inspiring story of personal and community achievement we have yet turned up."

UNION COUNTY, New Mexico, is an expanse of buffalo-grass plain and endless, lonely arroyos once highly favored for their privacy by manufacturing bootleggers of the prohibition years. As large as all Connecticut, it grows chiefly the more drought-resistant types of cedar, piñon pine, beef steers, and people.

Wheat grew, too, until the dry years came and northeastern New Mexico literally blew away.

The death sentence was pronounced one late fall afternoon in 1933. At one of the smaller cattle ranches in the breaks country—a twelve-thousand-acre layout called El Valle Escondido

—Raymond Huff had just ridden home after a gloomy appraisal of his parched pastures and hungry cattle. By the time he had unsaddled his pony the wind had died, but a strange, monstrous shadow on the northern horizon held his puzzled gaze for many minutes.

Closer, the thing became an ugly, rolling Niagara, black as the unknown doom it foretold, rising and bulging as sudden chill lanced through the electrically quiet atmosphere. Finally the wind struck—and the Huffs found out what a dust storm is.

For hours the gale whined and squealed, the ranch house shook, and even the nearby corral fence disappeared in a whirling, premature midnight. Inside, despite dampened blankets hung over doors and windows, light bulbs were only a dim glow in a choking, sifting miasma from which there was no escape.

Many dusters followed that one. All the next year they blew and the next, until dust had drifted to the window sills on farmhouses to the south. Cattle died or were shot by the herd by men who couldn't watch them starve. In many spots the fine, fertile topsoil accumulated in twenty thousand years of nature's slow manufacture was stripped completely away. Union County and adjoining sections of Oklahoma and Texas were near the very center and focus of a grim new gehenna called the dust bowl.

When the breakthrough came, sending wind-routed thousands from Oklahoma and Kansas south and west across Union County in the bitterest emigration in American history, Raymond Huff had determined on a counteroffensive.

A rancher by right of homestead and successful operation, the remarkable Huff had been also—for thirteen years—the superintendent of schools at Clayton, only town in the county of larger than hamlet size. Now the school board authorized his going to Denver to see what federal relief was available.

He came back with an allocation of money and some determined ideas about how to spend it. All over the nation such funds were being expended, often wastefully, and almost never, he believed, to fullest advantage.

Certainly nowhere could be found a whole population, under a double onslaught of hard times and tormented elements, more desperately in need of help.

But desperate as they were, Raymond Huff was bound that no leaf-raking, mock-work program would be permitted to insult the souls while feeding the bodies of these work-hardened rural people.

They began with a new gymnasium for the school. Its two-foot-thick walls were made of adobe dug at the edge of town. Most of the lumber had been cut and sawed near by, and only four skilled workmen, a superintendent, a plumber, an electrician, and a concrete finisher—were employed. The rest were ranchers and townspeople who learned their trades as they went along.

It was a successful experiment. The completed building, big enough for two full-sized basketball courts and a spacious stage, would seat as many as 3000 for the long series of school and community functions it has served since. It had been built at such little cost that frankly astonished federal authorities were willing to extend more "rubber money" for Raymond Huff to stretch over further projects.

But Huff, at the moment, was not interested. The gymnasium was not so much as finished before the relentless dust had struck full measure of Union County's tragedy into the very home where Raymond Huff and his lively, popular wife Vinnie Leal lived. Their fifteen-year-old son and only child, then a freshman in high school, fell ill and died from a sudden respiratory infection that raced to his brain before there was even time to get him to a hospital.

Heartbroken, the Huffs for the first time entertained serious thought of selling their ranch and saying good-by to Union County and its accursed winds.

The matter of a livelihood elsewhere was no problem: his position as an educational leader of his state had long since been secure. Only two years before, as chairman of the New Mexico Board of Education, he had turned down the formal offer of the state's dominant political group to enter his name for governor in the primary.

On the other side were his inborn stubbornness and the deep attachment to the soil that had brought him there in 1919 from the managing editor's desk of a San Angelo, Texas, daily newspaper to take up a homestead in the lonesome country northeast of Rabbit Ear Peak. Perhaps also he couldn't leave without feeling like a deserter to the community where he, too, had his roots down. He still doesn't talk about it.

A startled school board listened to his decision a short time later. It was not a defeatist's answer—not even a sturdy soldier's plea to hold the line. Under the circumstances it was pure defiance.

Raymond Huff was determined that Clayton, its 3000 residents, and all of hard-pressed Union County, at the bottom of its blackest catastrophe, should not only hold on but begin to build solid foundations for a future.

Build what?

Huff pointed to the dingy, red, two-story brick structure that served as the town's high school.

"Let's build a school as practical, complete, and beautiful as any in the country," he said, "out of our own materials. Consolidate the districts. Scout the county for every conceivable resource that can be put into the framework or furnishings of such a plant. We can make almost everything ourselves, and cheaper.

"But let's run our own show. Put the students to work—getting a practical education by helping build their own school. Call in our own people, who'll be joining that sorry caravan of jalopies bound for California unless they have grocery money, and let them build it. All they ask is a chance to stick to their homes."

Then he outlined how Clayton could build a "dream school"—three remodeled grade buildings, new high school, vocational and agriculture facilities, machine shops, athletic field, meeting rooms, even a blacksmith shop—with a bond issue of only sixty thousand dollars for six years, to be retired before the end of 1950 without any increase in the county's school taxes! The federal government would pay for the labor, Union County would dig for the materials.

At first Clayton didn't know quite how to take such a daring program. There were skeptics, and many too far gone in discouragement to believe that any future worth building for remained in this thirsty wilderness.

Rancher-teacher Huff, a medium-sized man who looks like the honorable but harmless cashier of a country bank, is deceptively persuasive. The school board (John Carter, Jr., president, Faris E. Roberts, J. E. Staley, A. E. Monteith, and E. R. Kiser) knew and relied upon Huff as a thoroughly practical man who, drought or no drought, kept his think tank full.

The program began. Huff permitted no false economy at the outset. The Southwest's best architect in his field was hired to draw up the master plans for a harmonious cluster of Spanish-type buildings with patios between, and a landscaped schoolyard enclosed by a stone wall.

A force of three to six hundred men from all over the county was employed on the project under the instruction of only a dozen or so skilled foremen. In time the aid was rotated among nearly six thousand men, boys, and girls, in a county with barely 10,000 population.

Three large wings were built on the new gymnasium, including a band room and a well-equipped five-room "home" created for a large girls' home economics department. Stucco was applied to the outside of the old brick school building. Interiors were done in rough, multicolored plaster applied by fathers and sons working together.

Rock was needed for the new high school building. A long search was rewarded when excellent building stone was discovered under eight feet of gravel in a canyon on the Moreledge ranch fifteen miles from town. Rancher-stonemasons got it out.

It was on the interiors of the buildings, however, that Huff's idea-a-minute mind really went into high gear. Scores of high school students were put to work on the National Youth Administration payroll to "make everything that goes into these buildings."

For supervisors, as Huff puts it, men were needed "with peculiar talents not learned in college." He gathered them from an outlandish variety of sources and backgrounds—a strange assortment of perfectionists united only in their double genius of working with their own hands and of inspiring others to do likewise.

First came Robert Brito, a Spanish-American woodworker and woodcarver of consummate virtuosity. Using Union County's hard pine, the high school boys under Brito's guidance cut out, carved, and finished chairs, desks, tables, doors, and woodwork for thirty classrooms.

All of the work is better than good, but frequently Brito achieved pieces that are worth a trip to New Mexico to see—a giant trophy case that sits on the main stair landing; a rich, intricately carved library desk; and a school boardroom that rivals in magnificence the directors' room of almost any large-bore corporation. Berry N. Alvis, the veteran high school prin-

cial and Huff's chief confidant, keeps it open to student council meetings.

Yet carved chairs which could not have been bought for less than forty-five dollars apiece cost the Clayton School District seven dollars for materials; hundred-dollar desks cost fifteen dollars.

Ben Alcon was brought to town to set up a small tannery. As the government killed off the county's starving cattle the ranchers donated the hides to make heavy, practically indestructible interlaced bottoms and backs for the chairs.

In a tiny lean-to blacksmith shop in Clayton, Huff one day watched a Spanish-American youth who could do wonderful tricks with iron. He hired him on the spot.

Under this man, the students gathered old automobile fenders, discarded farm implements, and scrap iron of all sorts, making from it all the ornate door hinges, curtain rods, locks, keys, and even the upholstery tacks that went into the furnishings. For the entranceways they made a hundred large iron lanterns, each of which would have cost a minimum of thirty dollars to buy. Actual cost: a dollar ninety-five.

Even the bootleggers did their bit, in absentia. From all over the northern section of the county students and ranchmen brought in whisky stills—scores of them—abandoned years before when their operators took hasty departure. The fine copper they contained, under the hands of Huff's metalworkers, took form as massive wastebaskets.

Huff knew and did not hesitate to mention to his patrons that this sensational worker of metal he'd placed in charge of a score of students had only recently finished serving a term in the Colorado Penitentiary. But once again he had taken a chance wisely. The young man proved so capable and earnest that he now owns a thriving business in a large Western city.

All this was well and good, but the dynamic superintend-

ent's originality hadn't even begun to decelerate at this point. His dominating idea was that a real school should be a place "to be happy in." He had an abiding dislike of the usual austere regimentation.

That was why he brought in still another Spanish-American who was teaching a group of native weavers in the tiny mountain village of Anton Chico. Under his direction, Clayton's girls went to work on wool clipped from Union County's sheep, washed it, carded it, and wove it into heavy drapes for classroom windows.

For dyes, they pulled up the weeds and herbs their instructor pointed out on the prairies, and made their own soft, distinctive shades from almost forgotten formulas of the Pueblo Indians.

As a result Clayton's youngsters nowadays spend their educational hours in sunlit classrooms as tastefully and richly decorated as the living room of a wealthy family's home.

From Montenegro came Miles Gjonovich to set up and operate a pottery department in which nearly half the school enrolled. Once again Union County produced a hitherto unknown resource. The jubilant Gjonovich found a deposit of pottery clay "equal to the best in Europe."

Today a large room is filled with the brilliantly hued, expertly glazed pieces his students have made. Proceeds from their sale have fully paid all costs of operating the department.

That, too, was part and parcel of Raymond Huff's theory: "work, learn, and be happy." Some eyebrows were raised when he put a well-stocked phonograph on the gymnasium stage and told his students to go there and dance at any off-hour moment they chose. The gymnasium he insisted on keeping open the year round for use by townspeople as well as students.

Here a very large school band tootles enthusiastically under the baton of Clayton's young, vigorous mayor, Douglas Cornwall.



By now a stadium had been built of rock, seating 3000 persons, beside a lighted football field. There, too, were four lighted tennis courts and a large skating rink—the first real recreational center in the entire county.

Under the stadium are rooms where county farm women meet regularly to can fruits and vegetables, as well as garage space for the busses which daily bring in students from as far as thirty-five miles away.

Good times came again by 1939. Much of the wheatland had gone back to the grass and cattle that were its proper purpose, and the stopgap aspects of Huff's experiment were completed. At a formal dedication Governor John E. Miles announced that for a cost to Union County taxpayers and the federal government combined of only four hundred and fifty thousand dollars, Union County had created for itself a magnificent school plant conservatively worth eight hundred thousand dollars at prewar construction rates.

Even more important than that, Raymond Huff could say with quiet satisfaction: "I believe that not a single destitute family was forced to leave Union County empty-handed unless they so desired. They stuck, they changed the face of our district, and they got back on their feet."

But not even yet were the full fruits of the program gathered. When the national emergency came Union County sent out no less than six hundred sorely needed skilled workmen to the war production plants. Virtually every one a man who five years before would have been classed as an unskilled laborer! They had learned by building their school. Nearly all of them led their veteran sons back to homes in a now prospering Union County.

On the home front the school's enviable machine shop undertook the sizable task of keeping the whole county's farm implements operating. Broken parts were mended; new gears

were manufactured; a portable welding outfit was put on wheels to go anywhere on call.

Nor was there any slowdown at the Clayton schools after the war. Huff installed some twenty thousand 'dollars' worth of ultramodern equipment in a new school cafeteria which now serves 500 students and clears the room in forty minutes flat.

A recent Huff project was a swimming pool—the only such in many miles. And Clayton now welcomes students from other towns, even in nearby states, without additional charge. Graduates from the large commercial department are in wide demand all over the state. There are always more jobs than graduates.

Delinquency is an unknown word in Clayton. School vandalism is almost beyond imagination—no boy will carve his initials in a desk on which he has expended hours of labor.

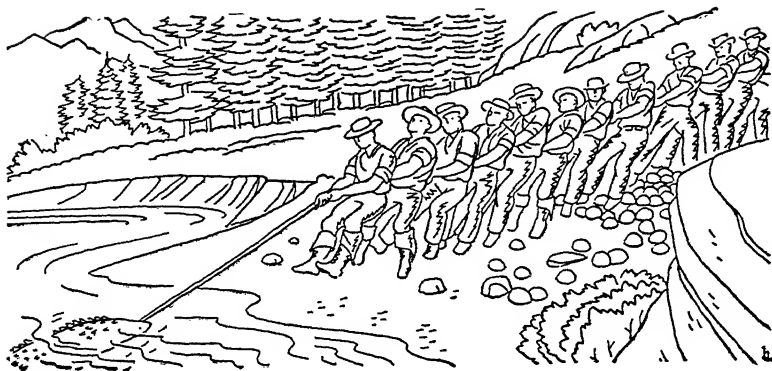
Teachers catch the spark early. "I work harder and enjoy it more than ever before in my life," says one. Only four faculty changes have occurred in three years.

School routine goes as snappily as if the student body were a battalion of United States Marines—but without the military discipline.

Clayton long ago abandoned thought of ever seeing its now gray-headed superintendent run out of ideas. But peppery Raymond Huff is the first to insist that he alone was not responsible for the transformation.

"We felt it was our own problem and that it was up to us to work it out ourselves," he says. "We merely set out to do the best we could with what we had."

That's Huff's simple summary of the stirring way in which an American community, facing disaster, dug deep into its own courage to work out its own salvation in a genuinely American way.



## *Idaho's River Monsters*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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Everybody loves a good fish story, even if the fish got away. Julius Paul, of Idaho, had three reasons for losing his: it weighed in the neighborhood of a half ton, he'd been playing it for a week, and the law was unhappy about the whole business.

SOMETIME during the night of June 12, 1947, a giant Snake River sturgeon struck a line baited and set by a thirty-four-year-old Idaho farmer named Julius Paul.

Eight days later, after an epic though intermittent battle along the Snake's banks a few miles west of Wilder, Idaho, the fish snapped a quarter-inch manila line in a brute-strength tug-of-war against twelve mere men and set sail down the river, the victor.

The lack of human patience that enabled the sturgeon to escape is something that Julius Paul rues bitterly. Another couple of days of careful playing, he contends, and the monster could have been hauled out on dry land for everyone to see.

As it was, no one except Julius and his cousin Steven Paul actually saw the fish. Julius estimates it weighed in the neigh-

borhood of eight hundred pounds. The figure, as the story spread, was upped promptly to a thousand, and Julius' sturgeon became a popular barbership and taproom subject for miles around.

But no one in this section of Idaho was greatly surprised or skeptical, for they were sure Julius had hooked Old Ironsides, the granddaddy of all Snake River sturgeon.

Old Ironsides is something of a riverside legend. Periodically along a five-hundred-mile stretch of the Snake he is reported on the prowl. In fact he is reported almost every time a fisherman ties into a big sturgeon and loses him.

There are precedents for Old Ironsides, however. The biggest sturgeon caught in the Snake, and registered to make it authentic, was a 1080-pounder landed back about 1905 in the Thousand Springs area. The Oregon State Game Commission says it believes a 1500-pound sturgeon was hauled out of the Snake in 1925.

Julius Paul never saw either one, but his eyes bulged and he trembled with excitement when his own sturgeon broke water. It was a monstrous creature thrashing to the surface, its great tail flailing the river white, its broad flank gleaming, its armored back looking as impregnable as a battleship's turret.

For Julius, the whole business started some fifteen years earlier when he pulled out a sturgeon which registered 362 pounds. That, according to the old river rats, was just a minnow. But it whetted Julius' appetite for the big fellows and thereafter he slipped down to the river whenever he could get away from his farm chores.

On the fateful day when he tied into Old Ironsides, Julius baited his eight-inch hooks with tripe, anchored one end of the line firmly to a boulder which he dropped into the Snake, and put a float on the other end. Next morning he discovered he had hooked a giant.

For two days Julius and Steven tried manfully but unsuccessfully to work the sturgeon near shore. The fish, anchorlike, refused to be budged. At night, and whenever they became tired, the two men simply tied the line to the float and left it there.

The third, fourth, and fifth days were hard to take. Rains swelled the turbid Snake into a mighty torrent. Winds whipped its surface. It was unsafe to row out to the float, and the sturgeon obligingly waited on the bottom.

On the sixth day the float was carried away and the Pauls had to grapple for the line. They found it once, lost it, then recovered it again. Old Ironsides was still there, tethered to the boulder. They battled to a stalemate through the sixth and seventh days.

By then word of the Pauls' struggle had spread and there were some three hundred spectators on the bank, even though this was during the busy farming season. Somehow word got to minions of the Oregon Game Department, and here the villains of Julius Paul's epic entered the scene.

After due study the authorities decided Julius had broken the law in hooking the sturgeon with a set line. A set line is defined as one that is left unattended for more than an hour. And Julius, although an Idahoan, had come under Oregon jurisdiction when he decided to fish the big bend of the Snake west of Wilder.

Julius argued with the game men at first. The Oregon rule about a set line, he contended, applied only to game fish and sturgeon weren't on the game list. But that was a minor point. He didn't mind paying a fine, or even going to jail, if he could only land Old Ironsides.

So he threw in his lot with the law and decided to help the authorities produce the *corpus delicti*. Julius counseled patience. The law was in a hurry. The law prevailed.

A half-inch rope was made fast to the quarter-inch line—at the end of which the sturgeon sulked—and a dozen men hauled away, heaving and ho-ing. But Old Ironsides, even after eight days, refused to yield. Presently the line parted, twelve men tumbled backward ingloriously, and Old Ironsides was gone. Julius almost wept.

Old Ironsides may never be seen again, but F. E. (Tex) Everheart of the Inland Sports Service Store in Boise says more sturgeon are being pulled out of the Snake than at any time since the start of the war.

The big ones average a hundred and fifty to two hundred pounds, Tex says, and even boys are coming home with sturgeon of from eight to twenty pounds. Perhaps the caution of the Idaho Fish and Game Department is paying off.

Until shortly before the war sturgeon were not classified in Idaho as game fish. Many old river rats made a living catching sturgeon. Tex bought almost all the sturgeon landed in the area, as many as twenty-five fish a day, brought in by river characters who reeked of sturgeon lure and whose matted beards and timeworn clothing were stained with sturgeon entrails. These fishermen told fantastic tales of sturgeon twenty-five feet long that they had landed in the old days, but they were such accomplished prevaricators anyway that no one knew how much of their stories to believe.

One species of sturgeon found in the Caspian and Black seas and the Sea of Azov reaches a length of twenty-four feet and weighs up to two thousand pounds, and common sturgeon eight to eleven feet long are not rare.

Some kinds of sturgeon seem to commute between the river and the ocean, but others stick strictly to fresh water. On the whole their habits are little known, but the giant sturgeon are believed to attain an age of between two and three hundred years.

"The biggest fellow I ever saw," Tex recalls, "was fourteen feet long. We didn't have scales to handle him, but he must have weighed close to five hundred pounds. I paid the fisherman for three hundred and eighty-five pounds of flesh after we dressed that fish, cut the head and tail off, and sawed him up."

Sturgeon were sold as steaks or kippered and served as appetizers at many of the swank hotels. The roe, of course, went for caviar. But so many sturgeon were being taken that it seemed they soon would become extinct if they weren't protected.

Idaho permits sturgeon fishing the year round, but the bag limit is two. Sale of sturgeon or parts of sturgeon is prohibited. They may be taken by hook and line only, and one set line is permitted.

Caviar, incidentally, is not easy to get. The eggs have to be just right—not too green and not too ripe—and it's hard to find them that way, let alone land a fish. A 165-pounder that Tex hooked was seven feet three inches long. It took three husky men almost an hour to drag it out of the river.

The typical sturgeon fisherman's rig is like something out of Paul Bunyan. The line is about three hundred feet of manila hemp, sash cord, or navy halyard line. To this main line are attached, at intervals of fifteen or twenty feet, five-foot lengths of cord which hold the hooks.

The usual sturgeon hook is a wicked piece of barbed steel about six inches long. A strong man cannot bend a hook with his hands, even when it is held in a vise, but sturgeon have been known to snap them.

The best bait, experts agree, is lamprey eels, which used to be plentiful in the Snake. A sturgeon would go after eels like a Muscovite after caviar.

Eels have been scarce, however, and fishermen have been using smelt or other small fish, muskrat, and even coyote meat. It is fisherman's lore that the bait has to be three-quarters

spoiled to be attractive. Some fishermen have been reported to use ten-inch hooks with a whole Idaho jack rabbit as bait when they're after the big ones, but this may be apocryphal.

Tex baits his hooks with smelt, then attaches one end of the line to a hundred-and-fifty-pound rock which serves as the end anchor. Smaller anchors—ten- and fifteen-pound rocks—are attached at intervals to keep the line on the bottom.

The entire rig is rowed out to the middle of the Snake, where the end anchor is dumped overboard. The line is played out as the boat is rowed into shore, and the land end is tied to a tree, preferably a willow, which will give like a fishing rod should the hooked sturgeon grow violent.

The main line thus lies across the current, with the bait trailing downstream. The sturgeon, a scavenger, roots along the bottom with his underslung mouth operating like a vacuum cleaner, and the bait is supposed to be there waiting for him.

The line is checked morning and evening, and if a big fellow has taken the bait, prepare for battle!

Sturgeon fishing is not without its dangers. Working with heavy rocks, it's easy to upset the boat, and a careless fisherman may find a six-inch hook impaling his hand as he drops the line.

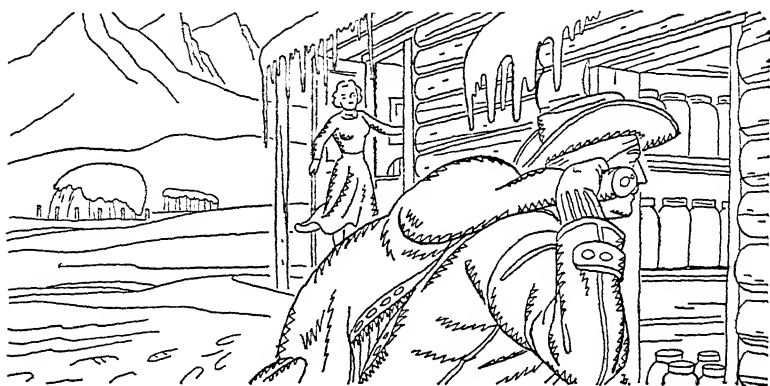
Fishermen from almost every state converge on Boise to try their luck, but Tex is lukewarm about the standing of sturgeon fishing as a sport. "It's fun, but mostly it's just a lot of damned hard work," he declares.

The work comes from the sturgeon's habit of sulking at the bottom when he is hooked instead of racing off like a trout. Only occasionally will he break water.

"You gotta work him over easy toward shore," Tex cautions. "If you get him mad and riled up by hauling away too hard, he just won't move. It's like trying to pull a waterlogged old log out of the river bottom with a fishing line."



As for Julius Paul, there is one small consolation to the unconsolable misery of a fisherman who has lost a big one. He cannot be convicted of a game-law violation unless the authorities produce something more than a frayed line as evidence.



## *Winter Is Not So Lonely*

BY ELVON L. HOWE

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With the writing of this story the author fulfilled a long-standing ambition. "For years," says he, "I had wanted to see in print a simple, unexcited portrayal of today's Western ranch folks as I know them. I was certain that the fullness, the freedom, the scope, and the sheer activity of the lives they lead would astonish most city dwellers in other parts of the country." Seeking at random "an ordinary good cow rancher in the remotest, wintriest section to be found," he got off an airliner at Rock Springs, rented a small flivver plane, and flew a hundred and twenty miles north across the Red Desert to the Barlows' ranch in the New Fork Valley. In today's West there are thousands of "Barlows," and as this story proves, they need no commiseration from their urban cousins.

SNOW CAME early to the New Fork Valley this year. It was barely mid-October when the Binnings, the Nobles, the Alexanders, the Barlows, and the other ranch families of this deep-grass cattle country looked off to the north to see the snow heads moving down from the Grand Tetons in the old familiar pattern of the year's longest season.

First the sharp east-west ridges of the Gros Ventres, then the ragged northern peaks of the Wind River Range were smoth-

ered in cold gray haze. Before long, in a windless quiet heavy with wintry premonition, the first flakes of the year settled down. By morning the cattle were nosing for their feed through three inches of snow in the hay meadows, and the recently completed haystacks stood like Quonset huts, each sporting its own new white roof.

The range cattle, still grazing away at the frostbitten bunch grass in the high summer ranges to the northeast, needed no instruction as to the portent written in the gray skies. By the hundreds they filed down through the opened gates of the drift fences, bawling their way slowly down the long fenced lane that cuts through the upper ranches all the way to the collecting pasture four miles below the lonesome little store-post office called Cora. There cowpokes from all the ranches met daily to cut out each man's cattle and drive the day's homecoming contingent to their respective home pastures for the winter.

The first snow melted, but more came and went as an almost daily reminder to the ranchers and their wives of the multitude of autumn tasks yet to be completed. Not far away, said the calendar, was the first big snow, the kind that rides in from the southeast instead of the northwest and transforms the scattered ranch houses of New Fork Valley into unrelated little atolls of habitation lost in a vast white sea.

Winter in this remote valley of western Wyoming means winter as Grandpa used to talk about it. Snow is second to none other among the controlling facts of life.

For four deep-drifted months it completely dominates every outdoor and indoor activity. Its approach sets in motion the longest, most strenuous preparations of the entire year. In the beef business out here, no other annual task looms quite so large as the weeks-long, all-inclusive preparations lumped together under the heading of "getting ready for winter."

By early January the big snows arrive, burying the lower strands of the barbed-wire fences, obliterating the roads, and setting the New Fork Valley off from the rest of the United States almost as if it were located in the Alaskan tundra.

The rest of the United States is far enough away in any season. There's a roadside billboard on the outskirts of Pinedale on U. S. Highway 187 (main route from Rock Springs toward Jackson Hole and Yellowstone) announcing that this interesting collection of log and frame houses set among the evergreens is farther from a railroad than any other incorporated town in the country.

The mail arrives on the daily Burlington bus from the nearest railroad at Rock Springs, which first must traverse a hundred and four miles of bleak desert and sparsely settled upland where elk and wild horses are more than occasionally to be seen from the roadway. The bus driver doubles as postman for the few scattered ranches and trading posts en route.

Fifteen miles on to the northwest of Pinedale, eight miles from the highway on the gravel road that leads past the Cora store, is the headquarters of the Bar-Cross outfit.

In a region adapted by nature to large-scale cattle raising, the Bar-Cross is a typical, slightly bigger-than-average sample. With its fifteen thousand acres, it is the fourth largest outfit in the county. Five thousand of those acres are stretched out in level, grass-rich bottomlands.

Norman Barlow, boss of the Bar-Cross Land and Livestock Company, is a big man who looks younger than his forty-seven years. He is the son of a Bountiful, Utah, fruit farmer, and his muscular six feet plus would hardly indicate that he was a promising young Salt Lake City bank official before he tackled the man-sized job of building up a large but run-down cattle ranch and bringing it through the depression of the thirties. How well he succeeded is evident on every hand.

There is good authority for terming Norman Barlow a representative rancher of his district: the voters of Sublette County have re-elected him several times to the Wyoming state legislature. And Miriam Barlow, his wife, is easily one of the most incessantly, not to say amazingly, active women of western Wyoming's third cattle-raising generation. She met her husband at the University of Utah after attending Wyoming U. for two years, and they have been married twenty years.

One gray day recently, when the remnants of the first snows were sprinkled through the willows and the Salt River Range to the west was already a gleaming white, I came to the Barlows' two-story log house to ask one question and stayed for a pleasant and most revealing overnight visit. The question, I admit, was a bit comprehensive.

"Will you please explain exactly what it's like to live in this country during the winter?"

The answer was likewise comprehensive, involving several hours of riding about the ranch and exploring the barns and storehouses, plus several more hours of evening talk and reminiscences of winters past.

"Getting ready for winter," Norman Barlow began, carefully translating the more abstruse cattle-land terminology to that a city feller could understand, "really begins with the haying season.

"We haven't had much trouble since the war getting haying crews, since the United States Employment Service recruited men for Sublette County from out of the state. The ranchers around here are more thankful for that, I think, than for any other single thing any government bureau ever did for them."

As every rancher knows well, it never starts raining regularly until haying begins. With one thing and another, consequently, it was the first of October, as usual, before the last

bent of hay was topped off and the rest of the work of getting ready for the snows could begin. With the home-ranch cattle already turned onto the irrigated meadows as fast as possible, part of the five-man winter crew had a deal of fence mending to do. The rest were busy for two weeks putting up the barbed-wire stackyards that must be placed around every individual haystack to protect it from unauthorized banqueting on the part of the cattle. Frequently the men were working directly under the brazenly covetous eye of Homer, the full-grown bull elk who attached himself to the Barlow herd last summer and has run freely with them ever since.

"We don't mind Homer," Norm Barlow said, "but his relatives are one of our biggest problems here when the snow gets deep.

"An elk has the greatest scorn for a barbed-wire fence. If he doesn't jump it he'll walk right over it and knock it flat. On the Willow Creek place they broke into twenty-three of thirty-two stacks and left practically nothing of seven of them. We even tried to scare them off with airplanes, but didn't bother them a bit."

Meanwhile the shipping season was in full swing. That meant long hours in the saddle, particularly for the boss and his foreman, Lawrence McKinsey. The latter, who came unmarried to Wyoming from Kansas and has remained a bachelor ever since, is a rare asset to the ranch.

Sky-high cattle prices after the war did not tempt Norman Barlow into selling off his cattle in extra-large quantity and thereby cutting into his breeding stock.

"I worked a long time to bring my herd up to the quality I want," he says, "and I was not going to undo it all just for a few extra dollars."

His shipping quota—the annual rancher's jackpot—is about the normal 700 to 800 head. Not so many years back the Bar-

Cross riders hit the trail as in the old days and drove the cattle the entire hundred and twenty miles to the Union Pacific at Rock Springs—a drive that required several days. Nowadays, however, they find it more economical to hire big semitrailer vans and haul them there.

During the war 562 Bar-Cross calves brought the highest price of any shipment ever to leave Rock Springs—up to that time: sixty-two dollars a head.

As early as October the first feeding operations were already under way as a hundred-odd head of steers awaiting shipment got a daily quota of hay to put a few extra pounds on their already bulging frames. When real winter settles down and the cattle can no longer forage through the stubble for their nourishment this feeding process becomes the biggest and hardest job in the crew's daily routine.

Wheels come off the hay wagons and sled runners go on. Horses plunge and leap through snow that is sometimes up to their bellies, breaking trail to the haystacks and back to the bottoms where the men roll the hay off while the horses pull the sled slowly around in a large circle.

The sun is no help either. In slightly warmer weather it thaws out one side of the hard-frozen sled trails so that the hay wagons slip off into the soft snow alongside.

"Those poor cattle!" many a softhearted greenhorn exclaims. "Out in thirty-below-zero weather for months without any shelter at all!"

The truth is that the hardy whiteface is better off in the open.

"Put these cattle in a shed," Norman Barlow says, "and they get overheated. Crowd them together and the first thing you know half of them are sick. Let them scatter out and take shelter in the willows along the creek bottom and they come through fine."

When real winter, sometime between late November and

the first of the year, rolls back the era from gas-driven rubber tires to nineteenth-century horse and sleigh, the line of parked cars grows long beside the Cora store. That's as far as the highway snowplows go, and the ranchers farther up the valley must leave their automobiles at the store and make their way back and forth from home on sleighs.

Back in 1936 the snow covered the tops of the fences. Six horses were hardly enough to break trail pulling a single sleigh, and it wasn't possible to get through to Cora even on horseback. That winter the Barlows didn't leave the ranch at all for two full months, and Miriam stayed at the Bar-Cross ranch house for the entire winter.

When it finally occurred to her to count up the days, she discovered that she had seen exactly two other women in a period of four months and twenty-one days—both of them neighbors who came by on necessary errands. One other year her winter isolation lasted just as long, except for one emergency trip outside to attend a family funeral.

Cold? You're darn right. This is the region of alcohol thermometers (mercury freezes at forty below), where toes, ears, and fingers freeze suddenly even though at this 8000-foot altitude the sun glances warm off the snow at thirty below. During the past few years, since the weather station has been operating on the other Bar-Cross ranch at Big Piney, forty miles away, it has reported some of the lowest average temperatures in the United States.

Norm Barlow remembers one brisk morning when he looked at the thermometer and read minus fifty-six degrees. When it stays under thirty below for more than a few days running he calls it a cold spell.

The rigors of snow, cold, and complete isolation are not to be made light of. For the men who fight the snow daily to keep hundreds of precious cattle alive, do the home chores, and



keep the ranch establishment in operation, it's not an easy life in the New Fork Valley in winter.

But how about the ranch wives? Isn't it an almost unbearably dismal hibernation for them, cut off in a bleak white wilderness away from their own kind, far from the shopping forays, the informal chitchats, and the other little essentials of feminine society?

Well, maybe. But urbanites who labor under the impression that the snowbound ranch wives of the West are a frustrated lot, going dully through the motions of living, yearning wistfully for the pleasures afforded their citified sisters, would do well to visit Miriam Barlow and save their sympathy.

Likewise the part-time philosophers who habitually decry the softness of today's generation as compared to their sturdy forebears, or those to whom the modern woman appears a decorative but essentially useless luxury item. It's a safe bet that grizzled Amos Smith himself, one of the earliest of the old-time cowmen to settle in the Big Piney country, would consider the manner in which his grandniece contrives to put together the best of the old and new generations and call her quite a girl.

The opinion was undoubtedly shared by her father, Perry W. Jenkins, one-time professor in a woman's college, Phi Beta Kappa and all that, who came to Wyoming for his health in 1908 and stayed to become a prominent cattleman, builder of the Bar-Cross, state legislator, and man of general note in Wyoming.

We'll proceed to have a look at the astonishing list of ordinary and extraordinary activities that occupy Miriam Barlow's fall and winter months. For an answer to the next question—"How does she do it?"—you'll have to ask her.

Hardly has the rush of summer work and summer visitors subsided (this, you remember, is a great dude country, and the

passers-by among the Barlows' nationwide acquaintance frequently overflow the big house) when the rush of haying begins. That means up to thirty hungry men for Miriam and her chief cook and pie maker extraordinary, motherly Mrs. Margaret Bramlet, to feed.

Long before the haying season is over the large, much-windowed, white-enameled kitchen becomes control center for that major undertaking, Operation Winter. At the Barlows' this bears no little resemblance to the provisioning of an antarctic expedition.

"On a lot of items," Miriam Barlow says, "we like to keep a full year's supply ahead. We had our own opinions of the war-time rationing boys back East who seemed to think we could get to a store every day or two to use our food points."

On one side of the kitchen is a glassed-in porch where the men eat. On the other side, she showed me the food storeroom, a veritable warehouse with home-canned fruit and vegetables ranked on shelves that reach to the high ceiling, and a four-foot-high bin for potatoes. The cream separator is there, too, which night and morning resolves the faithful efforts of five Guernseys into large pitchers of cream for the table and for the quantities of butter that Miriam and Mrs. Bramlet find necessary. Mrs. Bramlet has made and stored as much as fifty-six pounds of butter, by her own private method, without deterioration.

Miriam cans usually around 600 to 800 jars of fruit and vegetables each season, and of late years has made a trip to her brother-in-law's fruit farm in Utah to do much of the work there.

Come the first of November the first pig is butchered and added to the supply of beef that is already building up in a screened-off room in the front portion of the icehouse. There,

too, a year's supply of ice cut each winter from the ponds is stored in old sawdust. (New sawdust melts the ice.)

A great deal of meat is required for a winter's supply, as might be supposed from the fact that it is on the table in copious quantity three meals a day. Fruit juice, bacon, eggs, cooked cereal, steak, and sometimes gravy are the standard breakfast menu. Only fat, two-year-old heifers are used for the household beef—about fifteen a year, plus eight to fifteen hogs.

Between the meathouse and the log barn, which Norman completed as the first step in his postwar building program, is a sturdy new concrete-floored chicken house. Miriam Barlow is prouder of it than of a new Lilly Daché hat; it provides the maximum of homey comfort for the flock she tends with such diligence. The eggs go down in salt storage for the winter.

Not to be forgotten among her other animal family are her turkeys (the geese are no more since coyotes carried off the last of her eighteen early one Thanksgiving morning) and Cedric, the cat.

Besides her more domestic chores, Miriam Barlow not infrequently has done some hard riding with the cattle. She and Norm saw some lean years during the thirties, and then during the war there were simply no riders to be had. More than once she and her husband alone brought several hundred steers on a long two-day drive down from summer range.

There's not a square foot of the whole substantial, unpretentious house, built thirty-five years ago, that has gone without Miriam Barlow's personal attention. She's a demon with paintbrush, saw, hammer, nails, sewing machine, and embroidery needle. In the living room, dominated by a huge elk head shot by her father on the desert and said to be the largest on record in these parts, she's upholstered almost every stick of furniture

herself. The chair you sit in is likely to have a seat made of her own meticulous needlepoint.

The ceiling-high bookcases are loaded with Dickens, Mark Twain, and Shakespeare. The books are well thumbed.

She has decorated and painted every room, including as fancy a pink and white bath as you'd care to see. When she needed two closets in the upstairs bedrooms she seized hammer and saw and put them in. She's made the curtains, the bedspreads, the quilts, and the delicately embroidered dresser scarfs.

Her main wardrobe is supported by a jam-packed rod six feet long, and there is scarcely a garment which Miriam Barlow has not manufactured herself. This includes street dresses, formals, a half dozen stylish suits, and even the cherry-red winter coat for which she had a furrier fashion a large silver-fox collar.

She's an avid camera bug. All year long she snaps scores upon scores of miniature color photographs of ranch scenes, the gorgeous canyons and lakes that dot the glacial moraine toward the mountains north and east, and especially the profuse front-yard flower beds which are her summertime obsession.

When a dozen ranch wives decided to pay more attention to culture and formed the Sublette County Artists' Guild, Miriam Barlow started painting the water colors that appear here and there in the house. As still life goes, they could be called a bit impetuous. She paints only her beloved flowers.

What the arrival of their first and only child, after eighteen long years of marriage, did to that nimble-footed household agenda need not be described. They named him John Perry, and both Norm and Miriam are still incredulously happy. Their life is full.

After two decades of this slightly terrific schedule, is Miriam Barlow a work-stooped individual with tired lines in her face

and dish-water hands? Guess again. Her straight, slender figure is the kind to do credit to the merchandise of the smart dress shops, as it quite frequently does. Her neat blond hair has the color and sparkle of the sand at Laguna Beach. No stranger could reasonably guess that hers is the face of a woman married so long, and he simply wouldn't believe that this alert person is the same Miriam Barlow who spent her teens a cripple, suffering with tuberculosis of the bone. She regards her personal program as nothing at all exceptional, rapidly numbering off a half dozen other women in her circle who go the same lively, productive pace. "Western women are likely to be like that," says she.

Winter recreation? There *is* some, really, besides chatting with the neighbors over the party telephone line that serves six families at this end of the valley, besides the radio (Miriam and Mrs. Bramlet will have no truck with soap operas), besides the interminable poker, pitch, and solo games going on in the cowboys' bunkhouse.

There's the A.B.C. Bridge Club, for instance. Somehow it holds regular sessions all winter. Alone and on horseback, Miriam has cheerfully bucked snowdrifts for two hours to Cora "just to get in a two-spade bid."

But mostly there is the endless pleasure of reading.

"Damnedest readers I ever saw—Mim and Margaret," says Norm. "We take fifteen magazines, and they read every line of them. Margaret belongs to three book clubs and still wants more. They won't even eat with us men so they can sit in the kitchen and read. Margaret's own little cabin out back is full of books too."

"How about you and your Hereford journals and books on water adjudication and so on?" she retorts, confiding with little exaggeration that "Norm can recite the complete pedigree of every prominent Hereford bull in the country."

Operation Christmas at the Bar-Cross means a tree from a nearby ridge and ample Christmas atmosphere sprinkled white over the ground outside. After that come several trips to widely scattered cities in the Midwest, the East, and the Southwest. The trips are numerous in view of the number of affairs with which Norm has become identified. There are stock shows to attend, as well.

But even if she had no prospect of leaving the ranch again until calving time comes around in April to fill the kitchen, barn, and bunkhouse with ailing orphans of a new beef generation, Miriam Barlow would look forward to it with pleasure. Winter, to her, means the precious gift of time—"time to read, sew, knit, think, and catch up with living."

There are other things, too, that she will not be doing. She won't be risking life and limb in downtown city traffic, or waiting in line to buy high-priced meat and butter, or standing dull and flat-footed an hour or so a day on a streetcar crammed hip and thigh with humans. If Norman's cattle went to market that way he'd sue the railroad.



## *Mystery of Handcart Creek*

BY GENE LINDBERG

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If all the treasure supposedly buried in the Rocky Mountain Empire were to be found, the United States Treasury would reap some tidy millions in taxes. But caches are rarely uncovered, primarily because they exist only in legend. The elusive Reynolds treasure, however, has every indication of being real. Gene Lindberg, veteran of the *Denver Post* staff, was conducted step by step by Vernon Crow along the clues to the treasure spot, and then finally learned why the hidden gold is not likely ever to be found.

VERNON L. CROW is in his mid-fifties. He was born in the Platte Valley of Colorado thirty years after Jim Reynolds and his gang had passed into legend. But old tales of buried treasure never die. South Park and Platte Valley folk still tell of the horsemen who robbed gold-laden stagecoaches on steep Kenosha Pass and vanished as suddenly as if the mountains had gaped to receive them.

"All my life I've heard about those outlaws," says Crow. "I have reason to think I know the general whereabouts of their cache of loot."

The trail as pointed out by Crow leads up Handcart Creek,

northwest of Grant, Colorado, to a high, wild basin above Handcart Gulch.

"Smiley's *History of Denver*," Crow says, "records that a posse with four of the captured Reynolds gang started for Fort Lyon, east of Pueblo, to turn the bandits over to military authorities. But near Castle Rock the guards changed their minds and shot the prisoners.

"Before he died one of the prisoners told his captors the loot was buried three or four miles from the main Reynolds camp, and was marked by a crude dagger made from a file, driven into a dead tree a few hundred feet from where the loot was buried.

"He said Jim Reynolds drove the dagger into the tree part way, pulled it out, broke off the point, then drove the point deep into the tree ahead of the rest of the blade. If anybody ever pulled the broken blade out of the tree the point would still be left. But nobody was able to locate the camp or the dagger.

"Here's where I come into the picture. More than forty-five years ago, when I was around nine, an elderly Texan known as Tex Taylor showed up in the valley. My father, W. L. Crow, who homesteaded above Tinytown in 1873, had a logging contract at a sawmill near the point where the Reynolds gang was captured. Tex went to work for my father. Soon afterward he told Dad he was a nephew of a member of Reynolds' gang.

"Tex said his uncle, although badly wounded, escaped the posse and made his way to relatives in California. Before he died this uncle made a map showing where the loot was buried.

"Tex told Dad he had seen the map and had come to try to locate the treasure. He never found the landmarks he was looking for. Tex was about sixty then. He's been gone on the last roundup for many years.

"Sometimes he'd go down to Morrison for a few drinks and



come back feeling mellow. Then he'd perch me on his knee and tell me about the Reynolds gang and the map, and the treasure he hoped to find.

"Up the creek he was looking for, he said, there was a stone barricade behind which several men could lie and guard the steep trail to a little hidden park where the main camp was. Upcreek from this park, he told me, was a stockade corral where the gang kept horses saddled and ready for action.

"Taylor told me about Dan O'Malley, one of the Reynolds gang who got his hot head cooled with a bullet during an argument on the trail. So the boys hauled him upstream a mile and a half above camp and buried him under a big spruce tree. They carved a dagger on the tree to mark the grave.

"I heard Tex's yarns so many times I knew them the way other youngsters know their Mother Goose rhymes. Tex told me about the dagger Jim Reynolds drove in the dead timberline tree up in the wild basin at the head of the gulch. But Tex never would say how far or in what direction from that tree the treasure lay. That was his secret. So far as I know his secret died with him."

Those tales made a deep impression on Vernon Crow. As he grew up in the valley he kept his eyes open. But in time his mind turned to more practical treasure hunts. He began prospecting for the gold hidden by nature.

Back about 1933 he located mining claims on Handcart Creek, only a few miles from the Reynolds gang's major area of operations.

"Treasure hunting slipped my mind," says Crow. "In 1936 I was about three miles up the creek from my prospector's cabin in Handcart Gulch. Ute Indians used to camp in that basin and I was looking for arrowheads when I saw a crude dagger made from a file.

"Just the handle, dark with rust, was sticking out of an old

white, long-dead timber-line tree. I worked it out of the wood. The point was missing. I thought of the story about the Reynolds marker. I looked around a few times but couldn't spot anything.

"So I went back to work in my mine. But I still have the old broken blade.

"In 1938 I found the hidden park about a mile below my cabin. The old stone breastworks are still there, with fairly large trees now growing up between the stones. Above the park, just as Tex had pictured it to me, I found the ruins of the old stockade corral.

"And then one evening a year later I noticed a funny-looking mark on a large dead spruce tree almost opposite my cabin, across the creek in the timber.

"It was a crude cross cut in the bark and trunk, like a dagger with the sharp end pointing upward. A few feet from the tree, like a gravestone, was a rock set in the ground. Dan O'Malley's grave! It looked like landmarks Tex Taylor had told me about in my boyhood were cropping up, one by one, in Handcart Gulch.

"To satisfy our curiosity my nephew and I dug down by the marker stone. About four feet underground we uncovered some old rotten poles, and underneath the poles was the skeleton of a man. He'd been buried with his boots on. There was a bullet hole in the forehead, and the back of the skull was blown out, just as Tex said. We cleaned the dirt out of his eyes, and we apologized to him for disturbing his sleep. Then we covered him up again."

The trail up Handcart Gulch, along which Crow took us, starts at the ghost town of Hall Valley, some ten miles northwest of Grant. Just below the ruins of the old Hall Valley smelter, Handcart Creek flows into the north fork of the South

Platte River. The smelter was built in the 1870s by William Hall's English syndicate.

Through aspens and spruce trees, up a sharp grade from the townsite, Crow led the way. It takes keen eyes to find the trail now, but there, a half mile upstream, were the stone breastworks.

What a passer-by might mistake for a natural, curved ledge is actually a low wall of stones fitted together by human hands. Riflemen still could lie in ambush there to pick off intruders blundering up the ridge.

Uptrail is the little hidden park in an aspen grove. Near its center is a line of stones where once a lean-to stood on an ideal campsite. Still higher, the slope levels out into an area roughly square, about seventy-five feet on a side. To the right the bank drops steeply down to Handcart Creek.

Around this corral area still runs a deep trench. In the trees at the edge of the clearing farthest from the creek, stockade timbers lie where they fell, still side by side in what was once a solid wall of logs set upright in the trench. The ax marks on these crumbling posts are still visible.

"You've got to remember," Crow says, "what eighty years of weather can do to cut timber in this country. But weather didn't dig the trench surrounding this square. Men dug it and set posts in it. This was once a stout corral."

A mile or more upstream on the same side of the creek Crow pointed out the grave of Dan O'Malley. Before the big spruce tree died the living resin filled the deep blaze in the bark, but the dagger scar is there, its edges dimmed and roughened by years of growth.

Handcart Gulch is a fascinating gash in the mountain wilderness—a bit of Yellowstone set down in Colorado. Near the old grave a large iron spring bubbles from the right-hand bank. Mineral deposits form a thick rust ring around it like the edge

of a giant cauldron set in the earth. The iron-bearing water stains the stream bed and has laid down a huge deposit of bog iron.

"Remember that iron," said Crow. "It's important to the story in a way the Reynolds gang never dreamed about."

Crow led the way past a rockslide, and the steep, narrow gulch ended with dramatic abruptness. Up there, walled on the west by the peaks of the Continental Divide, is a huge wild basin, miles in extent.

Crow crossed the creek and walked up to a gentle slope some three hundred yards to two old dead trees standing flagpole-straight at this sheltered height.

He pointed to a small, narrow hole near the base of one of them, drew the pointless, rusty blade from his pocket, and thrust it part way back into the wood where he had found it. It fitted perfectly.

When a thinner knife blade is pushed into the hole the tip grates against metal. The point of Crow's dagger, hand-forged from an old file, is still in the tree.

"If the treasure is still there, it's somewhere fairly close to this tree," said Crow. "But where? You could dig blindly around here for years, and what would it get you besides a backache? Pick any spot in a half-mile radius and it's as good as any other.

"You can't use modern electronic detectors—the kind the Army used to dig up German mines in Europe. There's so much iron in this rocky ground that looking for a little blob of buried gold here would be as hopeless as hunting one straw in a haystack. A magnetic compass goes crazy up here. Dig if you want to. It's public area in Pike National Forest.

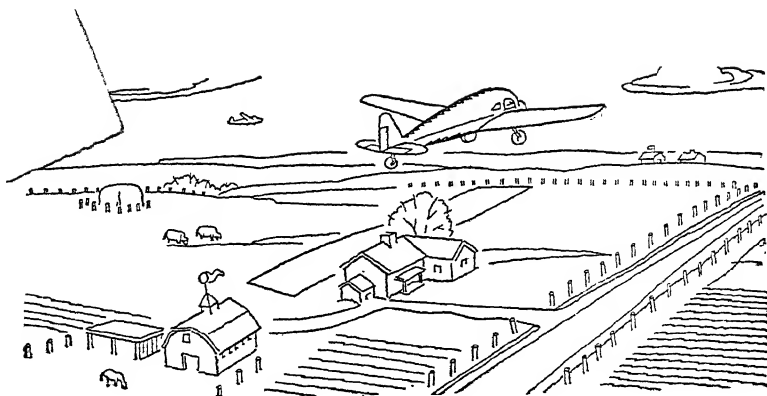
"For myself, I'll do my digging in the gulch back yonder on my claim. I know where the gold is, there."

Even if Crow had Tex Taylor's map and minute directions

in feet and inches, he might find an empty hole. There's a story about a Texas sheriff who treated a prisoner well. The prisoner, a former member of the Reynolds gang, drew a map, too, and told the sheriff where to dig. The sheriff, so the story runs, appeared in the Platte Valley years ago, stayed a short time, then returned to Texas.

He never admitted finding the treasure, but soon after his Colorado visit he retired to a life of ease. The source of his sudden affluence was a secret he did not choose to share—or so the story goes.

There are many such tales of the Reynolds gang. Old-timers of the mountains still will be telling them, eighty-odd years from now.



## *Windsock on the Barn*

BY ELVON L. HOWE

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A combination of predominantly clear weather, open country, and great distances to be traveled turned Western farmers early toward aviation. Here a comprehensive aerial survey of the heartland of the Flying Farmers movement shows how flying ends isolation and speeds an outdoorsman's work, and turns up as well some interesting anecdotes about flivver-plane pilots-in-overalls.

THE ROOF fell in on Walt Frizell's big cattle ranch east of Trinidad, Colorado, on November 2, 1946. When the flakes stopped tumbling in that storm eastern Colorado will never forget; forty-eight inches of snow smothered buildings, roads, and fences.

Out in the wastes, four miles from food and shelter, were 480 head of steers—a 14-karat fortune on the hoof.

It was eleven days before bulldozers from the ranch met bulldozers from town and the road was opened. During those days of isolation, loss, sickness, and danger, fifty-two-year-old Walt Frizell was better off than most of his neighbors. He flew.

From daylight until dark, pausing only for gasoline, his little flivver plane was in the air. He scouted the expanse of his

own ranch daily, directing cow hands on their plunging horses to those which were suffering most.

He flew groceries and mail and medicine to his own ranch and his neighbors'. The telephone wires were down, and he carried dozens of messages, flying over nearby ranches to lend help in emergencies.

Before it was over he had become so expert at dropping messages in weighted paper sacks to horsemen and tractor crews that the consignees "hardly had to leave their seats."

And he saved almost all his cattle.

Little life-and-death aerial dramas like this were occurring all over the storm area. Year in and out they are becoming so frequent, winter and summer, over Western farm and ranch country that they are almost routine.

On a three-state tour to survey the extent of the farm flying movement at its birthplace, the writer found Walt Frizell not at the large E. E. Frizell & Sons ranch home at Larned, Kansas, but busy with a transit at the small municipal airport near by, lending his university-learned engineering to the problem of installing new runways.

This two-thousand-mile aerial jaunt through and around the heart of the flying-farmer country was the result of an offer from the two earliest leaders at the inception of the Flying Farmers movement: Arvid Temple, of Buffalo, Oklahoma, and Gene McGill, of nearby Alva.

"Come down and make a swing through this territory with us," they challenged. "We'll show you where the real center of American aviation is nowadays."

They described a circle on the flat plains with a radius of some two hundred and fifty miles, embracing central and western Oklahoma, southern Kansas, eastern Colorado, and northern Texas.

A tour in Temple's four-place Stinson and McGill's two-

seated Cessna covered a large portion of that area and amounted, McGill said, to the most thorough survey yet undertaken of the Flying Farmers movement. It would be enough indeed to make any groundling's eyes pop.

Larned was a good and typical place to begin. Walt Frizell, who has commuted regularly by plane for several years between his irrigated Kansas farm and the Colorado ranch three hundred and seventy-five miles away, has started three flying clubs in his home neighborhood, and estimates more than six hundred Kansas farmers are flying.

"There were three times as many airports and farm landing strips in Kansas a year after as there were when the war ended," he said. He looks forward, however, to the day when there will be a "Henry Ford among the airplane manufacturers."

The really efficient farm plane has not yet been built, he says, and the volume is not yet sufficient to bring the price down where it ought to be—though even now an airplane will pay well for itself in ranching operations.

Southward into Oklahoma the situation appeared to have progressed to the point where there is almost a "windsock on every barn" and a landing strip near by, usually with a small tee hanger housing a 65- to 80-horsepower plane. In one stretch near Duquoin, I counted five consecutive farms that were so equipped.

Cy McDaniels' place is an example. His hard-packed runway, only a few hundred feet long and narrow as a one-way automobile road, has a tall barn at one end and taller cottonwood trees at the other. Though wide fields near by offer much more ample and obstruction-free space, Cy demonstrates a distaste for walking frequent among pasture pilots. He apparently refuses to land his plane more than a hundred yards from the house.



Off with his plane and his combines on his annual swing, northward through the wheat belt (he is a custom wheat harvester), McDaniels reportedly is teaching every man on his combine crew to fly. The reason is Gene McGill.

On the southern outskirts of Blackwell, an unusual establishment which is obviously the forerunner of many such greets the air traveler. Its proprietors are Mr. and Mrs. Dewey Mauk. They sold their farm a year ago, bought this level tract, and opened an airport.

A barn had been remodeled into attractive living quarters upstairs. On the first floor there is a store for aviation supplies, hardware, and all other chattels of a country store. Dewey Mauk has a dealership, and furthermore has set up a complete airplane maintenance and overhaul depot with low fees.

A member of the Oklahoma Aeronautics Commission and a battler for simplified federal regulations for utility aircraft, Mauk also hopes his station will not only pay its way but take some of the nonsense out of the still exorbitant airplane maintenance charges still in force in many parts of the country.

There's a lot of everyday flying around Blackwell, too. For years small planes have carried the town's daily newspaper to outlying communities, dropping off specially wrapped bundles without landing.

It was at Stillwater, eighty miles farther south, that the Flying Farmers movement took on several years ago the form of a national organization, with Gene McGill as president and Arvid Temple as vice-president.

If one man was more responsible than any other for recognizing the national significance of what was then principally a Sooner State phenomenon, it was Dr. Henry G. Bennett, president of Oklahoma A. & M. College at Stillwater.

After learning to fly light planes himself, at sixty, Dr. Ben-

nett has a fast, twin-engined Beechcraft and a pilot at his disposal day and night. He now virtually refuses to drive a car on trips longer than a hundred miles.

He covers the state's agricultural experiment stations regularly by air. On one not unusual day he flew seven hundred miles to fill speaking engagements in two Arkansas cities, returned to the college to preside at a farm meeting in the afternoon, took in a Rotary Club banquet in southern Oklahoma that evening, and was at home in bed by midnight.

"Future air age nothing!" he exclaims. "Around here we're in the middle of it right now. In the more spacious sections of this country the airplane is already an essential piece of farm equipment.

"Nothing brings more pleasure to farm families. Men and women who love the soil have been forced to pay for their independence heretofore in loneliness and isolation. For them, flying is not only fast, sometimes life-saving transportation, it is almost a new way of life."

Despite the well-known reluctance of farmers to join organizations of any kind and in spite of the growing pains of any new group, the National Flying Farmers Association now has chapters in almost every state and enumerates thousands of articulate members.

At Calumet, a short distance northwest of Stillwater, resides that notable individual, Heinie (known only to his wife as Henry) Bomhoff, who first attracted Dr. Bennett's attention by his exploits as a self-taught pilot.

Heinie learned to fly *sans* instruction in 1935 when his mail-order, garage-built plane took off, to Heinie's complete amazement, during a practice taxi run around the pasture. He spent the next hour and a half tentatively jiggling the controls and figuring out how to get the darn thing down again. He found he could turn shallowly to the left only. Finally one of his

tender maneuvers coincided with the pasture and he was back on earth again.

Several years ago Heinie hung his one thousandth coyote scalp at his belt. He has frequently utilized a solo gunnery technique which is severely frowned upon for beginning and experienced pilots alike—flying the plane with one hand and wielding the shotgun with the other.

Arvid Temple's home town of Buffalo, Oklahoma, stands already as what many an "air town" of the West is likely to be in the near future.

One of the principal reasons for this is the "Flying Temples" themselves. Arvid himself had been a pilot since the twenties and never wavered a moment as an aerial apostle. Now his wife and their three daughters, Mary Lou, Jo Nell, and Shirley, are all licensed pilots.

In Buffalo the airport is only three blocks away from the downtown shopping district and is the town's busiest traffic center from daylight to dark. Buffalo residents are in the habit of considering themselves virtually in the suburbs of both Wichita and Oklahoma City, cities each more than a hundred and fifty miles away.

Among the dozens of new and old pasture pilots in the nearby territory, many of whom we visited, is Rex Strickland, of Hazelton, Kansas.

A veteran fly-hard whose seniority as a flying farmer antedates even that of Heinie Bomhoff, Strickland completed his first homemade flying contraption in 1928, only to have the cows eat the fabric off the wings after a forced pasture landing. Next he built a 27-horsepower Meteor in his hayloft, but after many vicissitudes traded it for a motorcycle.

In the junk heaps he flew during the thirties Strickland survived fourteen forced landings and thirty-eight emergencies in the air without injury. He's the kind of guy who has flown

home at night without lights or instruments, landing by lighting flashes.

"There's fools and there's fools!" is his only comment about those days. Now his shiny, trouble-free postwar model is "the greatest pleasure of my life."

Down Wynoka way is another phenomenon not uncommon to this country—a farm airport operated by Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Kelsey and their sons.

Offering gasoline and oil service and hangars for those who do not want the expense of putting up their own planes, the Kelsey farm is a meeting place for local fliers and air travelers in considerable numbers almost any day.

Seventeen miles from Alva, too far out in the range lands to have a telephone, is Gene McGill's home farm. The extent of his conversion to aerial transportation is indicated by the fact that he manages to get along quite well without owning an automobile. He, too, lands his plane virtually inside the barn door, sliding down a sloping, twenty-foot-wide track in an alfalfa field to avoid walking from a good home air strip two hundred yards away.

McGill's chief claim to aerial fame, however, came up in connection with his extensive summer business as a custom harvester. With the plane he bought nine years ago he literally revolutionized the business by flying ahead of his combines to spot the best and most lucrative wheat crops for cutting, landing and making a deal with the owner on the spot.

It gave his competitors fits for a while, and now almost all of them regard a flivver plane as standard equipment.

In more than three thousand hours of flying, including night hops and hundreds of pasture landings, this highly educated young chemist-turned-rancher has damaged his plane only two or three times.

He hunts coyotes for his friends, but strongly discourages

that sport for any other than thoroughly experienced pilots who have completed several hundred hours of flying.

"Just about all the fatal accidents flying farmers have had can be laid to coyote hunting by men without enough experience," he says.

To manage his twenty-four thousand acres of rough, gullied range lands extending across the Oklahoma border into Texas, rancher Buck Irvin, of Woodward, rides his airplane as if he had Pegasus for a cow pony. Besides riding fence, hunting strays, bringing aid to sick animals, and carrying everything from salt to well pipe, he and his flying foremen give their planes heavy duty during roundup season. He has a fast plane, too, as does Harry Carlyle, of La Verne, which enable them to cover the whole Southwest rapidly on cattle-buying expeditions.

In Beaver County, weather-beaten Billy Wilson observes that he can check the twenty-seven windmills on his ranch in one hour by air—a job that formerly took two or three days on horseback.

West and south, the story of this quiet but remarkable transformation is the same—particularly so where the spaces are greatest and the roads poorest.

Johnson, Kansas, a town of 500, has a four-runway airport, hangar space for ten to a dozen planes with twice that many more staked outside awaiting new shelter, and a complete airplane maintenance shop to serve its half a hundred pilots in the immediate area.

The farmers are flying, but not raising any hullabaloo about it. These are pilots who mostly have forgotten they ever heard of a snap roll. Mostly they don't take as many chances as the ordinary automobile driver. They are flying because they have found in the light, land-anywhere flivver plane an instrument that combines the utility of a pickup truck, a fast convertible,

and a saddle horse, with more speed than any of the three.

Now that the families are flying, too, they're shifting rapidly to the four-place plane. But they all want to see one with such rural advantages as removable rear seats, larger cargo space, and better adaptability to rough pasture landings.

They're flying, too, because it's fun to fly.



## *Jackpot in Jade*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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A few years ago, neatly dressed, mild-mannered Chinese began to pop up in Lander, Wyoming. They usually moved on in a few days, after shipping out unusually weighty crates that were heavily insured. It was no oriental mystery but precious jade picked off the Wyoming prairie that had attracted artisans from old Cathay. You'll enjoy meeting Bert Rhoads, the man responsible for getting East together with West.

THAT exquisite jade pendant you picked up in San Francisco's Chinatown quite possibly was manufactured in Lander, Wyoming. And the raw jade which a Shanghai artisan carved into a figurine of Buddha very well might have been found on a Wyoming sage flat.

The source of this hard, green, valuable stone is the brush-dotted plateau and the slopes of the Green Mountains sixty miles southeast of Lander. This area was nature's hiding place for what undoubtedly was the world's largest hoard of jade outside of Asia. Was, that is, until a lean, keen-eyed rock hound named Bert Rhoads stumbled on deposits of it in the mid-thirties.

In the years since, Rhoads and some scores of others have combed virtually every foot of a six-hundred-square-mile area and picked up every visible fragment of jade thereon. Rhoads stacked the lion's share—estimated at from fifteen to twenty tons—in his back yard. Since Wyoming jade is valued at anywhere from five to fifty dollars a pound in its raw form, it safely might be said that the Rhoads yard contains more wealth in the rough than the vaults of the local bank.

To the untrained eye raw jade looks like any other rock lying among the sagebrush. Its surface usually is crusted with dirt, moss, oxide, and other foreign matter which the experts call bark. The characteristic green of the jade, which ranges from a pale, translucent shade to almost black, is visible only after the bark has been chipped off.

Jade may come pebble size or in a boulder the proportions of a small office desk. Bert Rhoads's wife, Verla, was the co-discoverer of a piece weighing 3366 pounds, believed to be the largest single chunk in the world.

Scientists are not sure how jade was formed or why it came to be scattered about the Wyoming landscape. It's theorized, however, that deposits far underground were lifted to the surface by repeated prehistoric upheavals and uncovered by erosion. Jade has been found only in pieces, never in a vein or deposits.

A romanticist might say that the jade had lain on the Wyoming prairie for aeons just waiting for Bert Rhoads to come along. Soon after the turn of the century he did come, a small boy with his pockets perpetually loaded with pretty pebbles.

As far back as he can recall, Rhoads was fascinated by rocks. His mother often scolded him for carrying them around in bulging pants pockets.

Rhoads was born in Colorado, and the family was on its way by covered wagon to Washington to homestead. The elder



Rhoads liked the Lander Valley so well when he stopped to camp that there they stayed.

For almost thirty years Rhoads tramped the countryside in his spare time, hunting for Indian artifacts, agates, crystal, and other semiprecious stones. (He has several thousand arrowheads and other Indian relics, one of the finest collections in the area.)

Then one day in 1936 he came upon an unfamiliar rock which was heavy and extremely hard. He suspected it might be jade and had an expert analysis made. It was high-grade nephrite jade.

That year he traded a used washing machine for a rock-cutting and -polishing outfit and cut some jade for his friends. Meanwhile he and Mrs. Rhoads were spending all the time they could spare from their hardware store in search of more jade, sometimes camping out for days at a time.

At first the townsfolk scoffed. "Look at that Bert Rhoads," they used to say, "spending all his time hunting for that worthless old green rock."

But as word of jade's value spread, increasing numbers of Wyomingites—and many from distant states—prowled through the brush.

Rhoads's method is to walk along until he finds a likely-looking rock. He taps it with a prospector's hammer to break through the bark.

Many followed Rhoads, trying to locate his secret "mine."

"Sometimes," Bert recalls, "we could see people on distant hills watching us through binoculars. I guess they were trying to see where we dug up the jade. When we got tired of being watched we'd throw any old boulder into our car and race off, and let those snoopers puzzle it out."

The Rhoadses even ran into a hijacker. Mrs. Rhoads had found a piece of jade weighing some three hundred pounds.

Bert drove back to town to summon an auto wrecker to hoist the boulder off the ground, leaving Mrs. Rhoads to mark the spot.

Presently a strange man and woman drove up. They threatened Mrs. Rhoads with a pistol, wrestled the rock into their own car, and sped away. The hijackers were arrested eventually and fined.

The areas on which the jade is found is mostly federal grazing land and, says Rhoads, he hasn't found anything which forbids his hauling the rocks away. In fact, he adds, stockmen are glad to have him clear off boulders.

Many Wyomingites, including Rhoads, filed mining claims on potential jade-producing land. There was some confusion until the technicalities of claims regarding surface (as distinguished from subsurface) minerals were straightened out.

In the fall of 1943 Mrs. Rhoads and a friend Mrs. Ray Morgan, found the 3366-pound jade boulder. Only a small portion of it was showing above the sand when they discovered it. The longer they and the menfolks dug, the larger it grew.

Finally they got under a portion of the rock and sent for a wrecker. A chain was passed under the rock, fastened to the wrecker's winch, and the power turned on. Up went the truck's front wheels while the boulder remained unmoved.

It took a heavy mining rig to jerk the boulder loose. The jade lay for many months in the Rhoads yard, since no one could possibly move it, until a shed was built around it.

The next largest piece of Wyoming jade was found by Alan Branham, a Lander grocer. It weighed 2410 pounds and was sold to James L. Kraft, the cheese manufacturer, who donated it to the Chicago Museum of Natural History.

In 1945 Rhoads found a 100-pound piece of jade sticking out of the snow atop Crooks Mountain. Some weeks later when

the snow had melted Rhoads went back, and this time found forty-two pieces weighing a total of 7000 pounds.

Rhoads had to hire a crew of men and a bulldozer to hack out a road to the peak. The jade made two truckloads and cost seven hundred dollars to bring back to Lander.

The main difficulty in moving the jade is that it refuses to be broken into smaller pieces. Whacked with a sledge hammer, it rings like steel but remains intact. Safe quantities of dynamite set off under a boulder usually do nothing more than lift it a few feet.

Rhoads cuts the rock with a diamond saw in his workshop. It may take several hours to cut from a rock a slab several inches thick. The shape of the desired article of jewelry—a cross or heart for a pendant, an oblong shape for a ring stone, a rectangle for a tiepin—is traced on the slab. A smaller diamond saw shapes the article crudely, and then comes the laborious process of grinding off the rough edges on carborundum wheels of varying coarseness.

The final step is polishing to a high finish, which is done with a chrome oxide powder wheel built up of many thicknesses of sole leather. Many polishing agents, including several widely advertised brands of dentifrice, were tried before settling on the chrome oxide.

A pound of jade worth fifty dollars in the raw will yield from five to six hundred dollars in finished jewelry, Rhoads says.

Seven years ago Rhoads sold his hardware store and opened a jade shop. So long as jade remains a semiprecious stone the future of Rhoads, his son Ralph, and his grandson Kenneth are pretty well assured. The plant, in which Bert is helped by his wife and Ralph, can process ten pounds of jade per month and in their yard is thirty to forty thousand pounds of it.

"I think we've cleaned up practically all of the visible stock

out in the fields," Bert says. "But more of it is being brought to the surface all the time through erosion. After the snow melts in the spring is a good time to look for newly exposed jade."

The fame of Wyoming jade deposits, and the Rhoads hoard, was not long in spreading. Chinese jade experts began to show up in the cow and agriculture town of Lander.

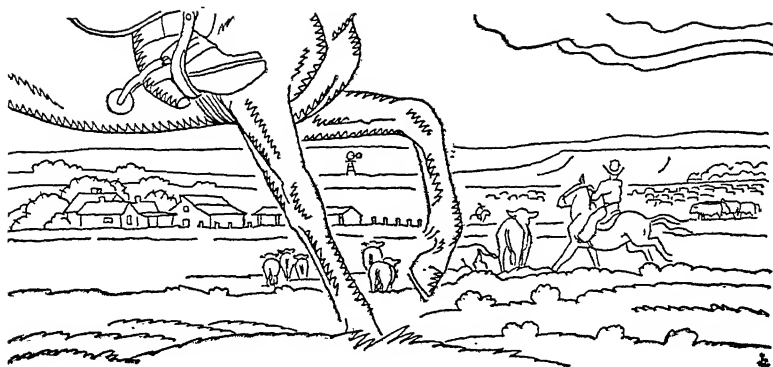
Rhoads sold a little of his rock to a Shanghai firm, but decided to keep the bulk of it to cut and polish himself. During the war, when Asiatic supplies were cut off, Rhoads sold much of his shop's output to Chinese curio merchants in San Francisco and Honolulu. Many of these returned to Wyoming among servicemen's souvenirs.

Meanwhile there is a good possibility that Rhoads's stockpile will grow greatly in value simply by remaining where it is. The famous jade fields in Burma, which supplied Chinese artisans for centuries, are reported to be picked nearly clean.

One of China's most famous jade craftsmen pleaded with Bert not to cut Mrs. Rhoads's 3366-pound boulder. He would, he said, like to buy it intact when the exchange rate is more favorable and carve it into a giant Buddha, a masterpiece for future generations to admire.

The Chinese, Chang Wen Ti, was a little disdainful of Bert Rhoads's output. "Why," he asked, "don't you stop this commercial work and start on a real piece of art? If you cannot complete it, your son, and his son, can carry on the work."

It's a good idea, says Rhoads, but hardly practical. There are always too many orders waiting to be filled.



## *Last Roundup on the Bell*

BY FRED GIPSON

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A man could ride in a straight line from sunup until sundown and never get off the old Bell ranch. It spread over seven hundred thousand acres of wild, open country that bred an untamable spirit in the cattle it raised and in the men who rounded them up. When the Bell place was split up into five ranches of more manageable size it seemed something died in the hearts of many a New Mexico cow hand. But the fine old stories that were born of the Bell will never die. Here Fred Gipson strolls amiably through some of the best of these tales.

THE SPRING of 1947 saw the breakup of another old-time cattle empire of the West. What was left of the famous Bell ranch, near Tucumcari, New Mexico, on the South Fork of the Canadian River, was cut into five pieces and sold to that many different owners.

To many a saddle-stiffened New Mexico cow hand, word of the breakup brought sobering thoughts and nostalgic yearnings for days that are gone. It sometimes takes news of this sort to make a man realize how quickly the years have stacked up on him, how far removed already is the old way of life.

For there was a time, not too many years back, when the

Bell holdings spread all over creation—seven hundred thousand acres, all under one fence. Why, a man could leave before sunup, ride hard on a straight course until the stars showed that night, and never make a track off the Bell outfit.

And it was cow country, too, from the ruins of old Fort Bascom to the high, bell-shaped mesa from which the ranch got its name. A country of high mesas, broken roughs, and broad flatlands, with buffalo and grama grass all over it.

“Every place except the rimrock grew grass,” is the way Harry Swift put it, and Harry ought to know. He ran the Bell roundup wagon every spring for years.

Harry and plenty of other old hands can recollect back to when 20,000 head of calves were rounded up in the spring, roped, dragged to the fire, and had the Bell brand burned on their sides.

Did you ever see 20,000 head of cattle, all in a bunch? Twenty thousand of them, milling and bawling and trampling the red prairie dust until it stands above them like a dark cloud?

There’s a photograph of a herd that size ornamenting the dining room at the Bell headquarters building. It’s worth making a long day’s ride just to study that picture.

Sometimes there were as many as five wagons and sixty hands sent out for a spring roundup. Sixty men for the pot wranglers and helpers to fill up with coffee, beefsteak, and sourdough biscuits. All of them eating against time, too, because the east was graying for daylight and yonder came the nighthawk with the remuda.

Then it was time to catch your first mount out of the rope corral made against the wagon. Time to saddle and ride the pitch out of him, if he felt frisky—and he generally did. Then line him out toward where the wagon boss sat on his horse on a little knoll, waving each man toward the circle he’d ride that day.

Ride a long circle . . . comb each draw and canyon . . . work through the roughs . . . keep shoving the cattle ahead and out into the flats . . . drifting them into the big gather where the branding crew worked in a dust fog, where the smell of blood and burned hair was strong in your nostrils and the bawling of the cattle was a constant din in your ears.

Snatch a bite of dinner . . . saddle a fresh horse . . . gather more cattle . . . brand more calves . . . work until your bones ache, until the dust has you hawking and spitting, until the night cool sets in and the sweat dries in a salty cake on the back of your shirt.

Then it's "grub pile" and time to slack off. Time to eat as slow as you please, swap a few lies, maybe play a little saddle-blanket poker before dragging your bedroll off the wagon and spreading it out under the stars.

That's how it used to be on the Bell. Five wagons, a sixty-man crew, a thousand-horse remuda.

And horses! Fine as you ever crossed a leg over! They'd sometimes set a man to picking daisies if he wasn't on the watch. But they'd take you there and bring you back. Clear-footed, too, because the Bell raised its own saddle stock, right there in the roughs. By the time any Bell colt was old enough to break out he knew how to keep his feet.

The Bell never raised a horse for sale. To have done that would have meant topping out the best horses each year and shoving the leavings on the hands. The Bell management operated on the theory that a cow hand needed a horse under his saddle and no Bell hand ever had cause to complain that he was sent out to work afoot.

All over the West the Bell held a reputation among cow hands as being a good outfit to ride for. It fed well, paid fair wages, and did its best to keep a man on the payroll the year round.

A lot of cow outfits made a practice of turning a man off as soon as the spring roundup was over. But when the Bell signed on a good man, it tried to keep him. After the roundup the Bell would put a man to fence patching, or horse breaking, or feeding cows at one of the winter line camps, or maybe pulling bog along the river.

That way, he wouldn't have to ride all over creation looking for another job, and maybe blow in his wages before he got one.

The management would let a man alone with his work, so long as he was getting the job done. And back him up when he needed backing.

Take the time, for instance, when the wagon boss got sick and the Bell manager, Charles O'Donel, turned the job over to Mark Woods.

Mark was mighty young for the job, too young, the way some of the older hands had it figured. They resented taking orders from a shirttailed kid and went out of their way to do things different from the way he'd told them.

Mark put up with it three or four days—as long as he could and still keep his self-respect. Then he fired the troublemakers and the others quit. There Mark was—right in the middle of a spring roundup with not a man in the saddle.

Mark said he never dreaded anything in his life like he dreaded having to ride to headquarters and tell what had happened. He was all braced to draw his time, too, when he opened the door and O'Donel greeted him.

"How're you getting along, boy?"

"Well," Mark said, "to tell the truth, Mr. O'Donel, I ain't getting along. What hands I didn't fire quit on me!"

O'Donel looked Mark up and down, studying him so long that the young wagon boss could have crawled through a floor crack if there'd been one handy.



Finally O'Donel nodded. "Well, that's the way to handle it, boy," he said. "If you're going to be boss, then be the boss. We'll get more hands—this spring or next."

And that's the way it was. Mark Woods was still wagon boss when the Bell finally broke up—twenty-five years later.

And all the old hands like to tell about the time Louis E. Stodard, one of the main Bell stockholders, came down from New York to look things over. Stodard was a big polo player and used to fancy saddle stock; he didn't think much of the looks of the cow horses on the Bell.

He said to O'Donel: "We need better horses here. Why don't you bring in some good studs and breed up these horses?"

O'Donel handed Stodard that hard-eyed look he was famous for. "I don't see where in the hell it's any of your business," he snorted. "I'm running this ranch."

And Stodard let it ride, just that way. If O'Donel hadn't been running the Bell at a profit, Stodard might have got together with the other stockholders and had him fired. But as long as O'Donel was drawing pay as ranch manager, Stodard was man enough to let him manage things his way.

A man could take pride in working for an outfit run that way; he knew where he stood.

Of course it wasn't all sweet cream and gravy, riding for the Bell. A man had his work cut out for him and sometimes it could get rough as a cob. Like pulling bog, for instance. Come spring, with the grass greening first along the edge of the Canadian, every day there was some old cow wading out into the quicksand and bogging down. There she'd be, bait for the wolves, if somebody didn't find her in time.

Dig the sand away the best you could. Then, likely as not, she'd been in that tight sand until her circulation was cut off and she couldn't stand. Or if she could, then the chances were

she'd try to horn you or your horse, just showing her appreciation.

Then there was the old Canadian itself. Wicked as sin, that river was. Meet a man coming from the river and the first thing you said was the greeting, "*Cómo le va, amigo?*" And the next thing you said was, "*Cómo está el río* [How is the river]?"

Always the river was too dry for a cow to get a drink out of, or so full of quicksand it'd bog a snake, or it was walking up on its hind legs with a red-rolling flood, just a-hunting for some horse and rider to drown.

Working some of that rough country wasn't pickings, either. There in Hells Canyon, the Dry Mule, Dog Basin, or that Watrous Canyon, it was all rocky, up-and-down country, full of old outlaw horses and cattle that would rather jump off a cliff than be crowded into a pen.

Some of them did just that, too. One time Oat Martime and some of the boys were chasing eight outlaw horses in Watrous Canyon. Crowded too close, seven of them jumped off a high cliff and broke their necks when they landed. The eighth, an old paint stud, backed his ears, bared his teeth, and came through the boys like a glory-bound bat. He came so fast that not a man touched him with a rope.

Riding in that country and after that sort of stock, all a man could do was just screw down in his saddle and leave it up to his horse. If the Bell hadn't raised the best, many a good man would have wound up with a broken neck too.

There weren't many hands that fought for a chance to winter in those line camps either. They were way off out there for months at a time, with no woman, nobody to argue with. Just a bunch of old cows—with maybe a buzzard wind singing like the harps of hell.

But twice a year they'd throw a big ball and barbecue for all

the Bell hands at headquarters, with fancy eats and women able and willing to dance until daylight. They made up for a lot of hard work and lonesomeness, those dances did.

And any time, some accident or incident was likely to crop up that'd make good conversation around the campfires.

Like the time when Arthur Tisdall was general manager and married that nice, pretty Scotch girl who didn't know a cow ranch from a pink-tea party.

There was a roan horse on the Bell called Mulberry, and Mrs. Tisdall, in trying to describe him to a cow hand, said the old horse was the color of "crushed heliotrope."

One rider recalled that cow hand looked like he'd squatted on a bunch of nettles when Mrs. Tisdall sprung that one on him. But he was a born gentleman; he just took a deep breath and never let on.

And then there was the time that George Hooker lost his temper. George was a mild-mannered man, as easygoing as you ever saw, until one day he and some of the boys were having such a hard time penning a bunch of mares at the shipping pens next to the Santa Fe Railroad.

They'd ridden down all their horses to get the mares up to the pen. But they were heading into it, at last, when along came a freight train with an engineer who knew how to be funny.

The engineer tooted his whistle a couple of times, just to see the mares scatter, and scatter they did. And that's when Hooker's face turned a beet red.

He unlimbered a .44 carbine and stuck three slugs through the cab window. He'd have got himself an engineer, too, if that driver hadn't pulled the throttle wide open as he ducked.

They said that afterward George was sure sorry about letting his temper get out of hand. He wanted to apologize, but never could get close enough to the engineer to make him listen.

Another yarn worth recollecting is the one about the time Albert Mitchell was managing the Bell and rode a horse into the top of a cedar tree and couldn't get him down.

Mitchell was one of the wildest riders that ever hit that range; any time he took out after something he thought he ought to catch it.

One day he got after an old outlaw steer in the Mesa Rica country. It was sure rough in there, but Mitchell rode onto the steer. He was just laying his twine around the brute's horns when the steer jumped off a cliff, dragging Mitchell and his horse after him.

They landed in the top of a cedar, Mitchell and his horse did, and there they stuck. Alvin Wagner says Mitchell had that canyon ringing with holler for two miles around, calling for help.

But when Wagner and some others came and finally tore away enough of the cedar limbs to let Mitchell and his horse to the ground, the two of them still had a wild steer on the rope.

Some happenings on the Bell were more curious than funny. Take that old spotted outlaw steer. He'd escaped every round-up for years, but finally got dragged into headquarters by a couple of hands who'd managed to rope him.

That old steer was a bad scrapper and the boys decided that while they had him caught they'd relieve him of those long horns he was armed with. You can generally tame the wildest of the wild ones by sawing off their horns.

But they didn't tame this one. When they let the old steer up, with his head all bleeding and his horns gone, he put every hand on the fence and then went pawing and bawling out to the wagon shed, hunting somebody or something to fight. Finally he gave up and wandered off toward the creek, still

bawling and stopping now and then to paw the dust up on his shoulders.

Along about dark, in came a rider who said there was a cow in the middle of the creek. Some of the boys went down to see, thinking maybe some cow had got caught in the quicksand.

But it was their outlaw steer. He wasn't bogged in the sand though. He just lay there on his side, with his head held under the shallow water—drowned like a rat.

It's hard to explain a thing like that. The boys hadn't roughed up that old steer enough to hurt him. And sawing off a brute's horns was never known to kill one—not within a couple of hours, anyhow.

All that the hands could figure out was that the old steer had too proud and wild a spirit to stand being captured and having his horns sawed off. The humiliation had made him go drown himself.

A big, wild, open country like the Bell used to be could breed that sort of untamable spirit better than anywhere else. In men or animals.

Take the case of Moises Romero, who was born on the Bell. At the age of seventy-eight, at the time the liquidation and breakup of the Bell set in, he was still a hand.

Moises got his clothes wet while rescuing a horse that got down in a water tank and was about to drown. He took cold from that and then got worse. They sent him to a hospital in Amarillo, where the doctors stopped his pneumonia. But still Moises lay there, listless, with no apparent desire to recover.

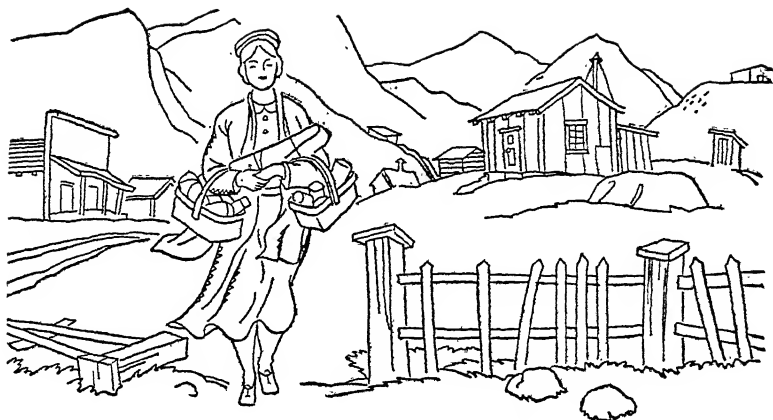
George Ellis, assistant ranch manager, went to visit Moises and try to cheer him up.

"Would you like us to take you back to the Bell?" he asked the old man. "We're having a farewell party there for all the old hands. We'd sure like to have you at that party."

But Moises shook his head. "No, señor," he said wearily. "There are too many fences on the Bell now!"

And a couple of days later Moises was dead.

The breakup of a big outfit like the Bell is a thing to take the heart out of a cow hand, all right. Especially the old-time sort. They're a race peculiar to themselves, and mighty independent. They can't stand too much fencing in.



## *Mary Ford, Her Town*

BY REBECCA TYSON NORTHEN

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Some towns are dominated by a mountain, a river, or the very bleakness of a surrounding desert. Other more fortunate communities are given an invisible warmth by the love and selfless devotion of one or more of its citizens. Such a town is Hanna, Wyoming, a dusty, grimy, unbeautiful mining community that has been made infinitely more livable by the personality of Mary Ford. While countless thousands of Rocky Mountain Empire residents have sped through Hanna, Rebecca Northen, of Laramie, Wyoming, was one of the few curious enough to stop and chat. Mary Ford, and the story of her town, made that visit a rewarding one.

**B**ETWEEN Medicine Bow and Rawlins, on the Lincoln Highway and the Union Pacific Railroad, stands the little town of Hanna, Wyoming. A few rough streets lead away from the main road. Tiny houses cluster in little groups, up and down the hills. Children play dangerously near the highway and the rails.

As you pass through, you wonder that people can exist in such dull surroundings, then you drive on and forget it.

But if you were to stop for a while, learn the intense drama in the lives of the people, learn the meaning of a little monu-

ment that tops a silent hill, learn why most of the older women are widows, if you could feel the bond of common tragedy that draws these people together, you would never forget Hanna, for you would meet Mary Ford.

Mary belongs to Hanna, and Hanna is literally Mary Ford's town. For many of its people she makes the difference between existence and living.

Fate gave her such a large share in its tragedy that it would have embittered a weaker person. But out of that she has become a woman with the strength and sympathy to soothe the hurts of others.

The life of the town, and Mary's life along with it, have been punctuated by catastrophes which occurred with cruel frequency in the turbulent early days, and still threaten its more peaceful life today. For Hanna is a coal-mining town.

It was born in excitement in 1889, when the Union Pacific discovered its great, thick seams of coal. Several mines were opened, one after another, and groups of small houses were built around each for its workers. The Union Pacific sent representatives to Europe who brought over Finns, Italians, Germans, and Englishmen to work in the mines.

It was considered a temporary camp, expected to last only until the mines were worked out. Now, more than a half century later, it is still considered "temporary," even though the coal is apparently inexhaustible. And the people still live in those same houses, or more exactly like them.

The center of life in Hanna today is its one hotel, Mary Ford's hotel. There from 4:30 A.M. often to midnight Mary ministers to the needs of about eighty miners. She feeds them, packs their lunch pails, tends to their finances, referees their fights, is confessor of their troubles. She ministers also to the needs of the whole town, and if Mary were to leave, the heart of the people would go with her.



When you meet Mary you meet a person whose energy you sense even though she is small, barely five feet tall. You wonder how this little woman with the clear, fresh complexion, lively blue eyes, and ready laugh can stand such a strenuous life, for you find in her no trace of tiredness, few marks of the sorrow she has borne. The secret is that she loves her life.

Mary Ford, then Mary Hughes, came to Hanna in 1906, at the age of fourteen. Already she carried responsibilities that would have burdened a grown woman. Her father was one of a group of Lancashire miners brought over by the Union Pacific.

Mary started early taking care of people. She had become housekeeper for her family at the age of eight, when her mother fell ill. Her mother died when she was ten.

It would have been enough to continue to keep house for her father and younger brother John, but her father brought three orphaned cousins, boys all older than Mary, to live with them. Ten-year-old Mary, for all her experience, was still a little girl and small for her age, yet she took care of all of them.

"I had to work and fight," Mary says, "work to keep us all clean and fed, and fight to keep the cousins from killing each other in their squabbling."

When they arrived in Hanna she wept for all she had left. Her pretty little English village had been traded for a raw frontier town.

"It was a frightening thing to come to Hanna," she recalls. "The houses were like boxes just set on the plains. Everything was bare, so unfriendly. No fences, no grass, no trees. Just the town, the mines, and space."

There were three mines open when Mary and her family reached Hanna. Mary's father went to work in No. 1. No. 2 was worked only intermittently. No. 3 was short-lived. Every

tunnel that was opened caught fire and the abandoned mine still burns after thirty years.

The very quality that made Hanna coal so desirable for the railroad, its high combustibility, made it treacherous to mine. Coal falling from the high seams, fires, and explosions cost many lives. The crude hand-mining methods of the times could not cope with the dangers. The main thing was to get the coal out.

Even now—long since the closing of those old mines—when machinery, good ventilation, and safety equipment have made the present Hanna mine one of the three safest in the country, the blowing of the siren brings fear into every heart, for nearly every person has a relative in big No. 4.

Mine accidents were not the only excitement in the early days. Every man carried a gun. The respectable men carried theirs for self-protection and seldom used them. But among them was a hodgepodge of drifters and outlaws who kept the town boiling with gambling, drinking, and gunplay.

"It was a rough place for kids," Mary remembers. "We lived in 'One Town,' named after No. 1 mine. There was nothing for the boys to do but get into mischief around the mines or the railroad, or hang around the saloons hoping to see a shooting. It worried me all the time.

"But there were so many men shot that after a while we didn't even get excited about a killing. A body would lie in the street all day, while people stood around exchanging gossip, waiting for the sheriff to come.

"Whenever there was an accident in the mine, though, everyone stopped what they were doing and anxiously gathered on the hill to see how bad it was and who was hurt."

No. 1 mine, where Mary's father worked, was a bad actor. It could have been closed in 1903 when a horrible explosion killed 169 men, nearly every male citizen of the town. Instead

the company spent five months removing bodies and rebuilding the workings so that mining could be resumed.

In 1908, two years after Mary's father went to work in the mine, disaster struck again. At 1 P.M. on a day when there were only a few men working a terrific explosion shook the earth. Smoke and gases poured out.

All of the men attached to No. 1, including Mary's father and many of the mine officials, formed rescue crews. They worked desperately to block off burning tunnels and remove wreckage.

By 10:30 P.M. only five bodies had been removed. Then there was a second explosion, far worse than the first. Every rescue worker in the mine was killed.

One whose life was miraculously spared was Bruno Stebner, a man who was to mean much to Mary. He had just brought a body out of the mine and had stepped away from the entrance when the blast occurred. Mary's father was deep in the mine, one of the 59 men killed.

And so, along with the lives of 228 men, No. 1 at last snuffed out its own evil life. It was never worked again. Some months later an attempt was made to remove the bodies, but only half of them could be found in the wrecked and flooded interior. Mary's father was the last to be removed. The entrances were sealed, and the mine remains the tomb of twenty-seven of those whose lives it took.

Today there are no scars on the site of No. 1. Grass and sagebrush cover the old entrances, and a pathetic little monument is all there is to mark its location.

Mary and her brother John stayed in One Town. John was twelve, too young to work in the mines, and there was little that a girl of sixteen could do to earn a living. The payment made to them by the company was small, and their father had not saved much on his wage of three dollars a day. They

had to exist on what odd jobs they could find. The cousins, whom Mary had looked after for so long, drifted away.

When Mary was eighteen she and Bruno Stebner were married. He gave Mary six years of complete happiness, the only interval in her life, except her early childhood, when she was taken care of instead of shouldering the burden herself.

Bruno, who was ten years older than Mary, delighted in his pretty little auburn-haired wife. He used to tease her about being his child as well as his mate. He liked John, whom he took to live with them. Mary was happy that John could go on to school. She herself had not finished the fifth grade, though you would not know it as you talk to the well-informed woman she is now.

Bruno ran the machinery for No. 2 mine. He was kind, generous, bighearted, different from his stern Prussian forebears. In his spare time he played with his family, took them for outings in their buggy (one of the few in Hanna.) People idolized this happy young couple who made life seem so good.

Remembering their own arrival in Hanna, Bruno and Mary particularly befriended immigrants, most of whom could not speak English. They helped them with their everyday problems, from buying things from the mail-order catalogue to helping with the baby's diet. In later years one of these "foreigners" in a Memorial Day address named the three men he considered great Americans: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Bruno Stebner. Heads were bowed at Bruno's name and tears dampened coal-blackened cheeks.

Mary had almost forgotten the first hardship of her life, everything was now so secure and happy, when one day in 1916 Bruno was brought home scalded from head to foot and laid dying on the living-room couch.

He had relieved an older man of the hard job of scaling a boiler, and while he was inside someone turned on the steam.

He died a few hours later, leaving Mary stunned by grief, this time to take care of three children, a daughter and two sons, aged five, three, and one. Mary was twenty-three.

If this happened to a woman nowadays there would be a lifetime compensation to help her bring up her children. But the first such compensation ruling came into effect a few months after Bruno's death, and was not retroactive.

The next years were bitterly hard, darkened by the deaths of two of her children and by the struggle to earn a living in a town where there was no work for a woman.

As Mary tells you of those years you realize that the thing that kept her from going under was her blessed sense of humor. Just when you feel the deepest pity for her she has you laughing with her as she tells, in her slightly "Lanky" accent, of the time a neighbor's goats got in her kitchen and ate up five loaves of newly baked bread, or of her ridiculous experiences with her stubborn old horse.

After a while Mary decided to run a boardinghouse and feed her family by feeding others. Before she could take in any boarders, however, she nursed Hanna through the influenza epidemic of World War I. She turned her house into a hospital, with cots lined up in every room and, between her patients and her children, had hardly a night's sleep for weeks.

Mary had been something of a good angel before, but now she was even more so. From that day to this people's first thought in emergency has been Mary. "The baby's sick. Run and get Mary." "A man's been shot. Send for Mary." "Ma's burned her hand. Run for Mary." So goes the refrain without cessation.

People seek her help with personal problems, too, and many a young person can face life with self-respect because of Mary's defense in time of trouble.

"I didn't make much money with the boardinghouse," Mary

remembers. "Many of the boarders would leave without paying. They thought a woman could be easily cheated, and I certainly could. But enough did pay so that there was food, if not much else, for my family."

Charlie Stebner, Mary's son, now a leading dentist in Laramie, remembers those years as full of excitement and confusion. "There was a tough assortment of men at the boardinghouse," Charlie says. "Mother would often wake me in the middle of the night when she couldn't stop a fight going on in the house, and send me streaking after the sheriff."

In 1923 Mary was married a second time, to Fred Ford. In the same year she gave up the boardinghouse and rented the shabby old Hanna Hotel, a rambling building resembling an old farmhouse. Like all Hanna buildings, it is owned by the Union Pacific, and all improvements must be made by the occupant. Mary's new husband helped manage the finances and saw that no one dodged his bill. But Mary continued to do all the work.

She added bit by bit to her boardinghouse furniture until there was enough for the hotel and the two bunkhouses which she later rented to hold the increasing number of boarders. It was a great achievement when she installed hot and cold water in every room and did away with the outdoor plumbing.

The bedrooms are plain but comfortable. The little front lobby is furnished for rough usage, and Mary has frequently had to mop up blood from its linoleum.

The dining room has an air of home, with its plant-filled windows and old-fashioned china cabinets that hold Mary's best dishes. There is a piano in one corner, around which the miners sing carols at Christmastime, and in another corner is Mary's desk. Her own small apartment opens from the dining room and looks out into the pretty yard she has nursed out of

once barren soil. The kitchen is big and rambling, warm and inviting.

During these years the Union Pacific began its monumental work toward safety in the mines, made possible in part by paying the miners by the hour instead of by the ton. The better life in the mine brought a better income to the hotel and enabled Mary to carry out her ambition for her son Charlie.

He was the first member of either her family or Bruno's ever to go to college. Mary's brother John was so outstanding in his work in the mine that he rose from one job to another, until now he is one of the top officials in the Union Pacific Coal Company.

The death of Mary's second husband was one more point in the game of fate against Mary. But she continued to be the stronger one, and seems to grow stronger with the years.

As the old miners retire, and since many of their sons have left the mines, the work depends more and more on transients. They are lonely men who come to love Mary not only for her good cooking but for her sympathy and understanding, and the many things she does to make her hotel their home.

Not the least of her services is looking after their money. Many of them turn their pay over to her to keep for them. "That way," says one, "we don't go broke so soon. If I don't have any money in my pocket I don't spend it, see? But if I need to buy some shoes I go to her and I say, 'Miss Mary, I want five dollars.' She says, 'What do you want it for, Joe?' Just like I was a kid."

During World War II it was Mary who practically kept the mine open. "She make us all go to work," says an Austrian named Mike. "We no get up, Miss Mary come and knock on door. She say, 'Mike, you get up.' I say I gon' sleep some more. She say, 'Mike, you get up and go work today. There's war gon' on.' So I get up. Like that. She tell me do it, I do it."

Mary's menus are designed to put weight on a man. Meals are served family style. The long tables in the big, friendly dining room are set with huge platters of meat, bowls of potatoes, vegetables and salads, homemade rolls and pie. The food disappears with astonishing speed as the miners heap their plates again and again. In the kitchen there are always coffee, milk, and cookies for those who get hungry.

When the miners' meals are cleared away Mary cooks for all sorts of parties, breakfasts, luncheons, banquets, for club groups, family reunions, and visiting Union Pacific officials. You would think that Mary might refuse such extras. But the homes in Hanna are too small for entertaining, and Mary knows that if she refused she would deny the people an important part of their social life.

She does all this cooking on a huge coal stove with ovens that take a quarter of beef or four turkeys. Mary has some unskilled help with the dishes, potato peeling, and cleaning, and once in a while a cook.

Mary's bounty goes deep. Whenever there is illness Mary sends whole meals as long as there is need. Many a person down on his luck has had free meals, or eats regularly at the hotel for carrying coal or helping around the yard.

All day long people stop in to see Mary. Visitors sit in the kitchen while she makes sheets of rolls or slices meat for lunch-pail sandwiches. In spare moments they chat with her in her attractive little apartment. On Christmas and Mother's Day the hotel is filled with flowers from those who have felt the warmth of Mary's heart.

There are among its people those who live only to get away from Hanna. There are those who would not leave if they could. Yet the bond that exists between both kinds keeps them close to each other. They are a wonderful people, gifted with qualities that lay dormant through the generations that served



the old mining era. These qualities have come out in their children. Charlie Stebner was one of the first to go to college. Now half of Hanna's young people go.

Yet the mine is still the lifeblood of Hanna, the sole occupation of its men, its only reason for being.

Mary's hotel has earned her enough money so that now, at fifty-six, she has the things most people want—security, clothes, a shiny car. In fact she could retire. Her son has been trying to persuade her to move to Laramie. But Mary does not hear his pleadings. The woman who has taken care of people since the age of eight can't stop doing it now.

Every fiber of her being belongs to Hanna, to those who lie buried in its earth, and to those who have taken their places. Friends of her own generation are those who lost with her in the disasters of long ago. The young people and the newcomers she has adopted in place of her own children have made her life rich with their love. The pattern of the mine, the rhythm of its work shifts, and the needs of its people are the pulse of Mary's life.



## *Wild Bill of the Circle-WR*

BY WILLIAM J. BARKER

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As a youngster he came to Denver to die of t.b. . . . and survived to see over ten million copies of his more than seventy novels go out all over the world. Here's William MacLeod Raine, most widely read living novelist, whose modest manner, handclasp acquaintance with frontier sheriffs and outlaws and common folks, untiring production of the books everybody reads, combine to make him a beloved Western landmark. Before joining the staff of the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine in 1949, Bill Barker had been variously a Hollywood screen writer, combat correspondent-artist with the 103rd "Cactus" Division in Europe, and co-founder and editor for two years of a sprightly little regional magazine, *Rocky Mountain Life*, in Denver.

LIKE the lean, capable Westerners who ride the danger trails through most of his more than seventy novels, lean capable Bill Raine is inclined to speak modestly of his achievements—when he speaks of them at all.

But there the parallel between his laconic heroes on horseback and himself ends. "Wild Bill," as his affectionately disrespectful family calls William MacLeod Raine, loves to talk, thrives on the old-timer's art of good conversation, has an

immense cache of colorful stories to draw from. These well-told tales make a visit to the Raine home in Denver an occasion not soon forgotten.

Bill has done a lot of living and experiencing in the seventy-nine years since he was born in London on June 22, 1871. His people were enterprising Scots of the best traditional sort: thrifty, devout, strict, but fair-minded. Bill's father was a London merchant, and if it had not been for the premature death of Bill's mother and a poster advertising the fruit country in far-off Arkansas, U.S.A., doubtless the Circle-WR brand would never have singed Raine cattle and subsequently inked Raine best-seller book jackets.

In 1881 the four Raine boys and their bereaved father said good-by to Britain and sailed for the enchanted land of America. To the brothers the stormy voyage would have been a great adventure had they not all become violently seasick; to the elder William Raine, their father, the journey was a severance from the past, not without its doubts and regrets. He was leaving old friends and relatives . . . in his ears the old Scottish song still sounded as they'd sung it in farewell: "Will Ye No' Come Back Again?"

The Raines found the United States an exotic place, from busy New York City, where their ship put the sea-wobbly Scots ashore, to their destination, the indolent back country of Arkansas. And to the Arkansas youth of '81, Bill Raine and his brothers, James, Forrester, and Edgar, were amazing with their "sissy" London suits and absurd bowler hats.

"The hats," Bill recalls with a smile on his strong, deep-lined face, "didn't stay on our heads long. Our new school-mates had a fine time kicking them around."

But the Raines quickly molded themselves to the local pattern. Within weeks they had discarded their citified clothes for jeans and bare feet. "All but James," Bill says solemnly.

"He was the eldest, and dignified. He continued to wear shoes."

Not so quickly lost was the Scottish accent. "The devils used to ask me questions just to hoot at the twist I gave words," says Bill. "However, in time the joke wore thin, as did our 'furrin' pronunciation." (Although Western author Raine is unaware of it, he still has a wee bit of plaid 'n' bagpipes in his speech on occasion.)

Red-bearded William Raine, Sr., had bought a fruit farm, but his slight frame fitted a saddle too. He went into the cattle business as well. So it was that the boys grew up familiar with the fretted bawling of stock, the techniques of the round-up and herding. Bill, a delicate lad, was no master at this rigorous trade, but his observation was keen and his interest great. Scenes of the dusty trail along the Arkansas-Oklahoma-Texas border were photographed on his mind and remain undimmed to this day.

William MacLeod Raine grew to shy, rail-thin young manhood and went north to Oberlin College in Ohio. Already a famous liberal institution, it was to influence Bill's sense of fair play strongly throughout his life. (Oberlin was the first college to admit women on an equal footing with men; and it admitted Negroes on a par with whites as early as 1835.)

Bill was not the orator in college that his brother James was, but he loved "public speaking" and recalls one forensic experience worth noting here.

"Probably I'm the only living man who ever debated with President McKinley," he says casually. As he catches his listener's look of interest he adds quickly, "It was a bit of college foolery, of course. McKinley was running for governor of Ohio, and had come to Oberlin to speak on the tariff. He was eating dinner at the home of our Professor Monroe.

"The students lined the sidewalk from Monroe's place to the chapel waiting for the great man to come out. I borrowed

a senior's plug hat without his permission and appeared on the chapel steps, bowing right and left.

"Somebody called for a speech. It so happened that I was scheduled for a debate on the tariff to be given by one of our literary societies, so I unloaded it on 'em, then and there. I argued against high tariffs and mentioned the 'learned gentleman who would presently speak in rebuttal' several times.

"When McKinley and Monroe appeared I vanished rapidly. But someone tipped them off to the situation, and to put himself in solidly with his college audience McKinley referred twice in his speech to the 'gentleman who preceded me.'"

Bold as he was in his fun with the boys, Bill was struck dumb by the presence of any pretty young woman—a source of considerable discomfort to a fellow with a deeply romantic nature.

His fictional cowboys frequently suffer from the same unfortunate malady. The heroines he creates are usually blessed with lines of conformation which would tie the tongue of the most hardened gunslick—a literary point upon which Clare, Bill's trim-figured, attractive wife, likes to twit him.

In one of the Raine Westerns the author described a fetching miss in levis as having "long flat thighs." Since then, whenever Bill is thoughtless enough to comment favorably about the appearance of a woman he has met, Mrs. Raine promptly asks, "Did she have long flat thighs, dear?"

Life for an author is not all praise and royalty checks.

At college the Raine boys worked at odd jobs to help pay expenses. Bill reported college news for the town paper and persuaded the Chicago *Tribune* and the Cincinnati *Enquirer* to make him their local correspondent. These jobs paid a pittance but gave the author-to-be his basic training in the five Ws essential to good storytelling—the newspaperman's who, what, where, when, and why.

Meanwhile the Raine ranch was having its difficulties. The boys' father, whose Scottish sense of thrift was blunted by his generous instincts, made investments which didn't pay off.

He constructed a toll bridge over a bayou at a strategic crossing point, a sound idea in theory. But he couldn't force himself to collect from his neighbors.

"When a poor renter would roll up in a dilapidated wagon full of dirty-faced little kids, Father'd advance to collect the toll," Bill recalls. "Then the cracker would scratch his thatch and say, 'Mr. Raine, 'pears like I jest don't happen to have no money on me today. How 'bout puttin' it on the books this trip?'"

"That became the local custom. Nobody ever paid. As a financial venture the bridge was a total loss."

Another venture—a sawmill—also failed to pay. Then the Texas fever, as it was called, struck the Raine herd and wiped it out. Meanwhile Forrester, the third son, died.

The Raines sold out their luckless Arkansas property and followed the setting sun all the way to Washington State, where the father resolutely started again—this time with a fruit farm a few miles from Seattle where now stands the town of Bellevue.

Bill was graduated at Oberlin in 1894 and stepped out into the chilling weather of a depressed America. This was the year of the Pullman strike and soup kitchens for Coxey's army of unemployed marching on Washington. Farm produce prices dropped daily.

The Raine brothers faced the parting of the trail. James became a minister and eventually a professor at Berea College on the edge of the Kentucky feuding country. Edgar joined the adventurous gold rush to the Klondike. Bill, still frustrated by the ill-health which had shadowed his way since

early youth, became a rural schoolteacher at the uninspiring sum of thirty-six dollars a month.

Life was bleak and tedious. Escape for an ill man lay only through the doors of books. Bill says that he was the worst teacher in the world. After two or three years he became principal of the South Seattle School at seventy dollars a month, with several teachers under him. The vast increase in his pay was due to the fact that he also agreed to serve as the school janitor.

But teaching was dust in his mouth. Were the heroes of Scott schoolteachers? Would Bobbie Burns have been content drumming sums into South Seattle skulls? Never!

So Bill finally wangled a job on the *Seattle Times* and began to live. Reporting was an adventurous game, though almost as poorly paid as schoolteaching. But each day it was new; each day you hunted for and wrote stories for the world to read.

And it was a reviving world. Bill was conscious of the drum tempo that had gradually come out of the drab monotone of the depression. Nations were expanding, bumping chests with each other. South Africa was being divided among the imperialist hosts and China was soon to be.

One more powder keg was exploded. The Spanish-American War opened in April 1898, to the headlong delight of this country. Bill Raine heard the siren song of adventure again and hurried to enlist for the Philippine campaign with the 1st Washington Volunteers, only to have his old illness bar the way.

The medical examiners called it t.b.

So it was Denver and the high country for Bill. He said good-by to his father, who was still carrying on his unbusinesslike benevolence. Raine, Sr., had bought land on the shore of Lake Washington and sold acre tracts to laborers with jobs in

Seattle. If the buyers had to move to find work or if sickness interfered with final payments, he understood and gave them their money back. After all, it was merely money.

Bill arrived in Denver with fourteen dollars in his pocket and no prospects of increasing that sum. He found himself a boardinghouse in north Denver and a reporter's job on the old Denver *Republican*.

The thin dry air of Colorado has always been famed as a panacea for those with "lung trouble," but Bill soon learned that it also leaves the ailing from lower altitudes exhausted after strenuous effort.

So you might say that Bill Raine became the most widely read living Western novelist because he was "stimulated" by Colorado's rarefied atmosphere. The editorial offices of the *Republican* (the building still stands near the southeastern corner of Sixteenth and Lawrence) were reached by a stiff three-flight climb. This stairway, confronting him several times a day, plus the long hours, finally forced Bill to quit.

His fever permitted no action for many weeks. He, the man who had always hungered for action and adventure, was forced to sit on the porch of his boardinghouse and consider the dim prospects before him.

But the romantic in William MacLeod Raine was restive. Gradually out of the mists of his reading, out of the swash-buckling historic period he liked best—the War of the Roses—a lone figure swaggered, sword at a debonair angle. On a pad of copy paper in Bill's lap this plumed gallant came to life; rode, fought, and made love. This was his first fictional hero.

But what a name he had! It's a saddle cinch Bill would be embarrassed to introduce this father of his heroes to his sons of the sage and plain. The forerunner of rawhide-rough Bucky O'Connor, Jack Roberts, Steve Yeager, and Joe Slade was Eustace Blount. Eustace!



The story, called *The Luck of Eustace Blount*, was 10,000 words long, and Bill sold it in 1899 to the then popular *Munsey's* magazine for twenty-five dollars. A door had opened to him, and his spirits raced with optimism.

*Munsey's* wanted more about Eustace, and so Eustace got into more scrapes and successfully buckled swashes right and left in a dozen short stories.

Bill went on writing brief fiction pieces full of costumed action and selling them, but the pay-off was low. As his health came back a bit he reported for the *Denver Post* and as time went on worked also for the *News* and the now long-defunct *Times*. He wanted now, of course, to be a free-lance author, and his later stints with the daily papers were really little more than base-touching as he raced for home plate.

He sold stories to *Harper's Weekly*, the *Ladies' Home Journal*, the no longer extant *McClure's*, and several others which have not survived to this monosyllabic day of *Look, Pic, Life*, and the digests.

Bill Raine's first full year of creative writing was 1899. Today, as an encouragement to the many beginning authors who call on him for advice and criticism, he points out that writing is just as tough as digging postholes.

"I sold stuff to half a dozen of the most outstanding magazines that year, working hard all the time," he recalls. "The net result for the year's grind was two hundred and twenty-five dollars. And I lived on it."

The Raine typewriter poured out feature stories, articles, and fiction steadily thereafter. One year Ben Lindsey, Denver's famed juvenile judge, became the hard-working author's literary meal ticket. Bill wrote the first magazine article about the colorful Lindsey, and followed up by selling at least a dozen more. Consequently Bill no longer had to stall his patient landlady. During his first year or two of free-lancing

his boardinghouse hosts had carried him on the cuff, with amazing kindness, for months.

Bill shifted from the short story to the novel for business reasons only. He realized that you could sell the by-products of a novel several times—a single plot, background, and set of characters would last half a year.

Novel No. 1 was a costume piece replete with ladies who could flirt or faint as the dramatic situations indicated, and heroes and villains who swore archaic oaths and swaggered prettily. For background Bill used the Jacobite rebellion with Bonnie Prince Charlie as one of the characters.

The novel made the grade. It ran serially in the *American* magazine under the title, *A Daughter of Raasay*, and was published in 1902 as a book by Stokes.

By literary standards Raasay's daughter was a flop, but she did point the way.

Representing the *American* magazine as correspondent that same year, Bill headed for Arizona territory. Through Governor Alexander O. Brodie, formerly lieutenant colonel in Roosevelt's Rough Riders, he got permission to ride with the Arizona Rangers.

Fortunately Bill was now well enough to stick in a saddle all day and sleep out under the stars at night. This was the life he had always wanted; these were his kind of men.

Memories of his early days came galloping back. Here was the frontier: vast, open, yet not big enough to dwarf the already legendary horsemen, good and bad and both, who claimed it as their own. It is probably as compensation for his physical frailty that Bill has always found pleasure in knowing hard, tough characters both for and against the law.

Bill still had his mind on fiction. He asked himself the obvious question—why not do accurate stories, action stories, about his own West? Only a couple of fellows were trying to

do anything really good with this dramatic material: Owen Wister (*The Virginian*) and Stewart Edward White (*The Westerners*).

The result appeared in 1908, a novel called *Wyoming*. It was the forerunner of some sixty-odd books which authentically and vividly present the most exciting aspects of the land of saddles and six-guns.

Characteristically, Bill is very critical of his own writing. Looking back on this landmark novel, he says: "It's really a terrible story . . . melodramatic . . . a hash of two novelettes joined together." Be that as it may, it has been earning royalties off and on for forty years. (A new edition of *Wyoming* was brought out in 1941.)

Spurred on by the acceptance of *Wyoming*, Bill produced another Western which ran in *Ainslee's* magazine under the title, *His Little Partner*, and appeared in book form as *Ridge-way of Montana*. In 1907 *Bucky O'Connor* came out serially and in 1910 as a book.

Soon Bill was averaging two novels a year, each of them with serial sales before publication. Reprints followed first editions. All of his books were issued in turn by a British publisher. To date, translations of the Raine books have been printed in nearly every language.

More than 10,000,000 books bearing the Circle-WR brand have been sold to date. That's an average press run of more than 150,000 each.

Bill Raine liked to think of himself still as a newspaperman and occasionally interrupted his fiction writing to take newspaper assignments—a practice he continues to this day.

So it was when he covered the labor troubles in the Ludlow, Colorado, mines in 1914. He reported the two-week trial of John Lawson, the labor leader held responsible for arousing the strikers. Bill's sympathies were entirely with the miners in

his releases from Trinidad, which went out over the country.

This was the year also when the movies started to translate Bill's novels into vehicles for film cowboys, using that formula which was as successful then as it is today.

At the outbreak of World War I, George Creel was chosen to set up and run the Committee on Public Information, a smaller prototype of the OWI which came into being during World War II. The organization was formed to get the story of the war effort to the Americans and their Allies, and Creel called Bill Raine to head the division in charge of syndicate features supplying the longer articles to newspapers.

In the postwar years Bill felt the urge to wander. After all, he could write anywhere. The West was under his hat, and his office was any spot that would support a typewriter.

His still popular *Judge Colt* was written in France, at Antibes and Nice, where he spent a pleasant year with fellow authors Max Eastman, Floyd Dell, and Frank Harris. Most of *Moran Beats Back* was written in Africa, back in 1925. Both stories have continued to sell; both were reprinted as recently as 1948 for the nth time.

"The best thing about a Western," Bill explains, "is that it can't become dated. Like Tennyson's brook, it goes on forever."

A recent incident underscores this observation. A Hollywood agent wired Bill a hurried offer for *Oh You Tex*. Bill had to answer regretfully that the Fox Company had already bought it—twenty years ago.

People are usually surprised to learn that Bill still turns out a novel a year, although he has reached an age at which he might gracefully retire. However, after talking to him, you soon understand that writing about the West is as vital to him as three meals a day.

True, he no longer drives himself so hard. He customarily starts writing about 9 A.M. and pecks away in a small, barren

office next to his bedroom. No business-school typist, he clicks the words off rapidly and accurately, using two fingers only. He stops early in the afternoon to relax over a game of bridge or gin rummy with old friends.

Very little hashing over is necessary the way author Raine writes. He smokes a cigarette, mumbles to himself, puts sentences together in his head, then types them down while they're hot on an original sheet and three carbons. Few writers can, or do, work so directly.

Three of his books are reference texts, valued by students of the West and indispensable to other authors of cattle-country novels. His *Famous Sheriffs and Western Outlaws* (Doubleday, Doran, 1929); *Cattle* (co-authored by Will C. Barnes, Doubleday, Doran, 1930); and *Guns of the Frontier* (Houghton Mifflin, 1940) would assure Bill Raine's place among the great reporters of the Rocky Mountain Empire even if he had written nothing else.

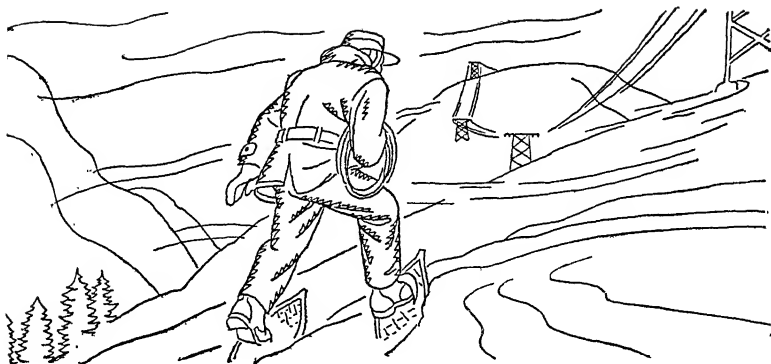
William MacLeod Raine would be the first to scoff at the highbrow idea that he has written great literature—yet how many persons across the world right now are sitting down with a Raine novel, prepared to relax and forget their immediate surroundings and cares?

One of these books starts:

Along the well-rutted road, a bull outfit crept. The sun was sliding down toward the western hills. Its rays streamed in a silvery sheen across the desert mesquite. A cloud of fine yellow dust rose, stirred by the feet of hundreds of oxen. The yoked animals swayed forward patiently, laboriously. Behind them the yellow trail ribbon stretched many arid leagues. In front of them it wound its tortuous way for nearly a thousand miles.

That ribbon pointed to the land of gold.

That book, one of Bill's best, is appropriately named *Colorado*.



## *High-line Patrol*

BY BLAINE LITTELL

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Patrolling the high-tension cables that bring electricity over the Continental Divide into Denver is a job with one notable distinction: you start at the top and work down. Blaine Littell, who accompanied John Robertson on a patrol through a snowstorm, quickly learned why it's a topsy-turvy job.

**T**OWER No. 804, a lofty latticework of thin steel girders, is a third of the way up the timbered mountain that frowns over Georgetown, Colorado. Three strands of steel-cord aluminum wire hang from 804's massive insulators and stretch out east and west into infinity, leapfrogging up over the crest and down into the valley along a long series of identical towers.

No. 804 is just one of more than a thousand similar structures along the 157-mile high-line leading from Denver, over the Continental Divide, and down again to the powerhouses at Shoshone, near Glenwood Springs. Electricity, at 110,000 volts, flows over these lines, bringing heat, light, and power to the eastern slope.

The line was completed in 1908 by the Public Service Company, but that was only the beginning. Maintaining that line is a year-round, never-ending job. Every foot of wire and every tower must be watched and protected from lightning damage, fires, snowslides, vandals.

Twenty-three miles of that line, from Idaho Springs west to the top of Argentine Pass, is John Robertson's particular responsibility. He knows every tower by number and location. He walks the route two days of every week in the year, inspecting every tower and insulator. The other three days of his work week he cuts brush, clears trails, keeps the growth down along the right of way.

In winter, when the blizzards howl down off the Divide, the big job is to keep the snow packed and trails open so that repair crews can get in if the line should snap. It's lonely work. It's also strenuous work. John Robertson, thirty-one, a compactly built, hard-muscled woods veteran inured to life in the higher altitudes, likes it.

It is 10:30 A.M. of a gray winter day, and two men are standing on the switchback trail a stone's throw from 804. Below—almost straight down—Georgetown's drab roofs are scattered in a geometric maze, and the black ribbon of U. S. Highway 6 stretches through the snow of the valley and snakes up toward the heights of Loveland Pass. Far yonder, it is hard to make out where the hills end and the sky begins.

"It's going to snow," says Robertson in a flat matter-of-fact voice. He is bent over to strap the harnesses of his snowshoes. A hunting cap with ear flaps askew is perched on his head, and he wears a pair of faded blue coveralls over his inner clothing.

"The hell you say," replies Olie Larsen. "I can still see the sun."

The mild, laconic argument has been going on ever since the two left the hamburger stand on the highway between

Idaho Springs and Georgetown. It isn't much of an argument because both know it will snow, and Larsen is just arguing.

Today's run is from tower 804 to 841, across two 11,000-foot ridges. That would end them up close to the Ute Creek cabin and an automobile ride down a winding road to Idaho Springs. Thirty-seven towers and seven miles to go. The sooner they start, the better chances are of hitting the cabin before night-fall. John's snowshoes start crunching up the hill.

At the base of the steel tower they stop. John pulls a key from his pocket and opens the padlock on the door of the green-painted tool shed—doghouse in lineman lingo.

The interior walls are covered with coils of wire, tackle blocks, clamps, wire grips, and ponderous insulators.

John lifts a phone receiver from the hook and cranks a handle. A small, tinny sound comes from the phone. That's the dispatcher in Denver.

"This is Robertson at 804," Johnny says. "I'm here with Larsen . . . starting the run."

"Okay," the voice comes back. John hangs up, swings the door shut, and snaps the padlock.

"Patrolmen call Denver every time they come to one of these doghouses," Larsen explains. "If you don't show up they can start looking for you."

Years before, this stretch between 804 and 841 had been his run. Now graduated to a semi-desk job, he was making the patrol with Robertson "just for the hell of it."

A wide swath through the brush follows the high-tension wires straight up the mountain ahead as if somebody had loosened a giant stair carpet at the top and let it roll down the valley. Now the men are walking up the route between the first and second towers, and at intervals John tears twigs from the bushes and stuffs them in his hip pocket.



"They sprayed this section here last summer with some kind of Army plant killer," he explains. "Looks like it might have done some good . . . stuff grows up in no time anyway."

John walks rapidly despite the incline with short, powerful steps. Passing under a tower, he looks up without breaking his stride. Then his eyes drop down to the narrow path again. This casual, practiced glance upward is probably the most important part of John's job.

A lot can happen to the line. "Just one bolt of lightning, hitting the wires any place, can cook an insulator," Johnny says. "Especially during the thunderstorm season in summer. Lightning on the way to the ground won't let nothing stand in its way."

"Then there's the hunting season," Larsen adds.

"Yeah, those hunters," Johnny laughs. "Get 'em all liquored up and full of beans, and whammo! . . . There go your insulators."

But winter, as both agreed, is by far the worst season.

"First you got icing," Johnny says. "That's when you sometimes get enough ice hugging the wire to twist one of these towers all out of shape. Funny, but the wires are built to stand more of a pull than the towers. Then you've got snowslides. Thousands of tons of snow come down off a hill and buckle up towers like matchsticks."

"We reroute whole sections of high-tension wires," Larsen adds, "but there always seem to be more slides."

It is Johnny's duty not only to report damage already done, but to anticipate it as well. That glance upward under every tower must tell him whether a coating of ice on the conductors will amount to nothing, or whether it's time to stand by for trouble.

As they trudge single file up the hill the sky grows darker

and gusts of wind flay the powdery snow. Billows of it whirl up the slope until it becomes part of the whiteness which blurs the boulders and pines in the distance.

The slope steepens and the going gets tougher. Snow, seeking its level in the valleys like so much marshmallow sauce, has little chance at staying up here. Only a few furtive patches still cling to the slope. The rest is crumbling rock and brush.

Johnny and Larsen take their snowshoes off. John pushes his single ski pole through the rawhide webbing and carries the shoes over his left shoulder with about as much apparent effort as a boy with a fishing pole. From time to time he grasps the bushes on the uphill side of the slope with his right hand.

Larsen, carrying no pole, uses his snowshoes as canes, digging their ends into the crevices.

It is getting colder.

"See that big boulder up ahead?" Larsen shouts. John stops and turns around to listen. "I remember once sitting behind there when a big stag came walking up the hill toward me. The bugger like to fell over me before he saw who I was."

"What'd you do?" Johnny bellows against the wind.

"Nothing. Thought sure'n hell I had a fight on my hands, though, but he just looked at me kind of stupid-like and then heaved on back down the slope."

There are no signs of wild life, no tracks in the snow. The hard winter has driven the deer and elk to lower altitudes. Then, too, when Larsen had this patrol, the area was a wild-life preserve. It isn't any more. Larsen remarked later that it didn't take long for critters to wise up.

Now comes the snow. It comes hard, fast, and suddenly. They reach the next doghouse in a matter of minutes.

Inside it is immediately warmer. As the wind wheezes around the shack John lights a cigarette and rubs his hands together.

"It helps you get your wind back," John says, and inhales deeply. "Don't ask me why."

Outside there seems to be nothing but the blinding snow. John says it is only a few hundred yards now to the top, but it seems at least twice that. The path traces a tortuous zigzag up the slope. Sometimes the earth under the snowshoes crumbles and the men slip and grab desperately at twigs.

Every few yards of the terrain seems to require different tactics. They loosen their snowshoes, carry them short distances over the bare ground, and then strap them back on again, only to reverse the process twenty yards later.

And always the wind whips and the snow swirls. Larsen ties a sweater around his face. John is up ahead and out of sight. As they clear the crest the wind reaches new heights of fury. But now it is on their backs and the direction downhill.

And then the snowshoes begin to behave like unwaxed skis in wet snow. They skid forward or stick suddenly and the men are almost thrown on their faces by their momentum. But it's easier than climbing.

It has taken well over two hours to get to the top of the mountain. Going down the other side, almost at a trot, is a forty-five-minute jaunt. In the lee of the next doghouse John stops and calls the supervisor again.

Here the snow is deeper, and the wind has eased up.

"It's faster on skis," Robertson says, looking back up the hill. "But I'll stick to snowshoes. A man's liable to get a broken leg or something on skis. You're alone, so then what?" The question remains unanswered.

Once John's hip knotted up on him badly while he was replacing a broken insulator. He had to keep moving—the only alternative to freezing to death. So he had started crawling, and miraculously the disabled hip began to function again.

John drops his cigarette in the snow. "I still got the other

half to go," he says, pointing with his ski pole at the white fire-break which seems to leap straight up the mountain ahead. "Larsen, you follow the highway around the base of this hill and I'll meet you on the other side."

John disappears into the trees. In a few moments he can be seen well on his way up the slope—a small dark blur scaling the wall of snow like a crippled fly on a white picket fence.

The "highway" is a narrow, snow-choked path through the jack pines and aspens.

"We've been bringing the snow buggy through here," Larsen says. "It makes it okay."

The Public Service Company owns four such snow buggies—combination half-tracks and skis the Army once used.

"The machines we got now speed things up a lot," Larsen continues. "Before we opened up some of these roads, stuff had to be carried up the mountains by linemen. I was with a gang that lugged telephone poles halfway up Argentine Pass."

The sun, invisible all day, has dropped behind a hill and it becomes darker suddenly. Then somebody whistles from around the bend in the road. It's John, in the lead as usual. He stands in the snow, smoking.

"I didn't want to holler," he said. "Stuart down there in the cabin might have thought we were in trouble."

Stepping off the road, he leads the way down through the tall pines. E. V. Stuart, the company's superintendent of transmission lines, is waiting at the cabin door.

Ordinarily Johnny's wife is waiting at the end of the patrol with their high-centered Model-A Ford, and they drive home to Idaho Springs. This, however, is a special occasion and the big boss, who has hiked many times from one end of the line to the other, is the reception committee.

It is warm inside. The stove is roaring and the aroma of bubbling chili and beans mixed with the flat smell of melting

snow fills the room. Larsen takes off his jacket and shakes it by the open door. Its back is matted with snow and shiny like cake frosting. Johnny produces a bottle and takes a long swig. He passes it to Larsen, who pours some into his coffee.

"This is real coffee," he says.

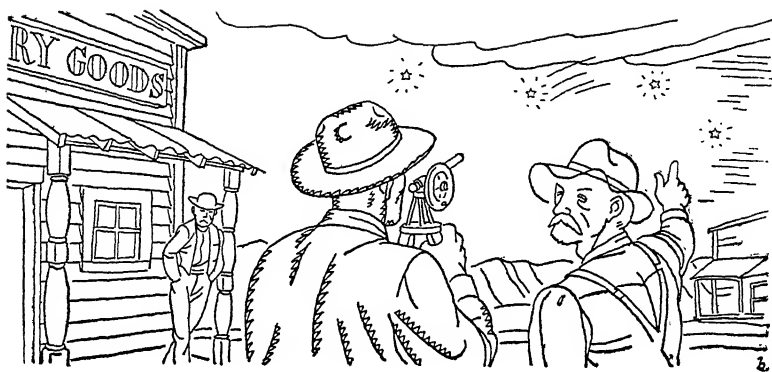
In Stuart's car, twisting down the narrow road to Idaho Springs, Johnny relaxes in the back seat.

"This ain't a bad job," he says. "Work five days a week and pull down time and a half for overtime. . . . Sure glad I don't have to patrol Argentine no more."

For two years John had the Argentine Pass run. He lived in a lonely cabin on the shoulder of the 13,132-foot pass, reached only by trail from the settlement of Montezuma, and patrolled the high, desolate stretches of the Continental Divide. When the Idaho Springs-Georgetown section became available, Robertson came down from the high country.

"Down here it's a cinch," Johnny chuckles. "By the time I'm sixty, though, this'll seem tough too. Pretty soon they'll have me on the flats out of Denver."

Stuart, peering through an open spot in the frost on his windshield, is philosophical. "It's the only job I know of," he says, "where a man starts at the top and works down."



## *He Gathers Stardust*

BY DORIS GRUENWALD

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Like countless others, Kansas biologist H. H. Nininger was fascinated by shooting stars. Unlike most of them, he set out to satisfy his curiosity. The step meant giving up his home and job, loading the family into a homemade house-car, and wandering, gypsylike, across the country. That was 1925. Since, he has recovered thousands of meteorites, adding infinitely to the store of knowledge about these wanderers from outer space. This is his story by a writer well qualified to tell it—his daughter.

**I**N THE FALL of 1923 an obscure Kansas biology professor was startled and fascinated by a sudden flashing illumination of the night sky as he chatted with a colleague on a quiet street.

A “shooting star” had blazed briefly above its fellow celestial lights and was gone.

For the biologist that swift, brilliant beacon was a will-o'-the-wisp and a challenge. He set about tracking down its remains and has been chasing stardust ever since. It was the first of a series of systematic hunts that were to make him the world's only “sky detective.”

Today, though he is recognized as the No. 1 authority on

meteorites—those sky stones that flame into brief torches as they plunge through the earth's atmosphere—Dr. H. H. Nininger is still thrilled by every falling "star" that crosses his horizon.

He lives in the midst of eight and one half tons of matter from out of this world, displayed and stored in every available niche of the red sandstone building in which he has established a unique, all-meteorite museum on Highway 66 near Winslow in northern Arizona.

"It was exactly 8:57 P.M., November 9, 1923," he recalls.

"I was talking with a fellow professor in front of his house. Suddenly the night was changed into day as if someone had thrown a giant electric switch—and two seconds later it was as dark as a deserted coal mine."

His action then was in accord with instructions he has given thousands of times since to would-be star chasers—find a landmark, check the degrees and course the flight, remember the time.

"I checked the time," he says, "and without moving my feet, made a pencil mark on the sidewalk where I stood."

The following morning, accompanied by a physics professor, he took a bearing over the top of a pine tree with the aid of a surveyor's transit.

Newspaper space was secured to request reports from readers who had witnessed the fall. A night's reading of the resultant heavy, contradictory mail left him baffled.

Patiently he charted reports from points approximately encircling the probable site, using a method he has found through the years will pinpoint a fall within an area of a few square miles. Most observers, he finds, are too excited or too slow to be very accurate.

Dr. Nininger marked on a map the point in the air where a consensus of the most reliable reports indicated the meteor

"vanished," and a ground point beneath it. Then he triangulated, using a line between these two marks as a vertical side.

(A second line is drawn from the air end point to the earth according to the reported degree of flight. An approximate midway point on the third, or base line, will mark the probable area of fall.)

The chart placed the fall site within the bounds of Kiowa County, Kansas.

Spare-time lecture trips to the locale, though nominally concerning bird life, gave him opportunity to recruit residents in the search for what they came to call the "lost meteorite."

Nininger admits now the stone he eventually identified as the November 9 meteorite, found in adjoining Comanche County, represented an entirely different fall. Years afterward his 1923 specimen was located—right in Kiowa County.

Right stone or no, his first find was a worthy accomplishment in the light of past meteoritic history, whose annals included only recovery of eyewitnessed falls or chance discoveries.

In 1925 the will-o'-the-wisp won over professional routine. With the aid of a bank loan, a carpenter's assistance, and a mind's-eye picture of what he wanted, the biology professor constructed a crude house-car on a truck body.

Beds fitted into collapsible canvas wings were to provide sleeping space for himself, Mrs. Nininger, and three children—ages six, three, and five months—during eight months of travel across eight thousand miles of Southwestern roads.

His assets as he started out across country in "the most important move we ever made" were nineteen dollars and sixty-seven cents in cash; a series of natural-history lectures; his wife, Addie, whose ready-for-anything spirit hasn't worn off even today after thirty-four years of marriage to the stardust chaser; and a measure of courage which was two parts curiosity to



one part daring and at which he is somewhat mystified today.

The Southwestern journey was the first of many auto travels through the United States, Canada, and Mexico. On these trips he alerted the curious to a search for the sky stones, or traced down rumors of heavy, dark-pitted "rocks," remembered to have been seen months or years before in someone's yard or pasture or perhaps stuck in a stone wall.

But no trip had such low "downs" or such high "ups" as the 1925 tour when one occasion found Dr. Nininger with neither the stamp nor the necessary three cents to post a letter seeking a lecture contract at the next town. Fortunately there was gas in his house-car tank to take him there.

Another low point was reached at the Circle-Bar Ranch of former Governor William E. Sweet, of Colorado, where the simply fed family watched a canine aristocrat bury an inch-thick, foot-square steak in the dirt.

At Corpus Christi, Texas, a diminutive Christmas tree perched sadly in the truck cab when a dim holiday prospect was turned bright by the local school board president. He contracted for a series of six lectures at a hundred and twenty dollars and made a personal purchase of a hundred and fifty dollars' worth of meteorites.

Then near Jerome, Arizona, perseverance and his ever-present curiosity led Nininger to a valuable find of prehistoric lion tracks.

He taught until 1927 before he decided to depend on meteorites to "somehow" make him a living.

Then he moved to Denver, where his collection of meteorites was on display in the Colorado Museum of Natural History for sixteen years. Between duties as curator at the museum he followed his will-o'-the-wisp across more thousands of miles and over more ups and downs—financial worries, disinterest, battles with superstition.

Once he was virtually ordered from an Arkansas town because he dared to discuss such non-existent things as rocks fallen from the sky. But he can point to the Society for Research on Meteorites, now the Meteoritical Society, which he helped found, for four years serving as president. Once a crew sinking a shaft in a meteorite crater near Crestone, Colorado, refused to work in belief the hole was "jinxed" because of meddling in out-of-this-world matters.

Fifteen years after representatives of a great museum "closed the books" on the Plainview, Texas, shower of 1917, declaring the total fall to be composed of twelve stones, Nininger took his plan of recovery into the fields. He showed samples to workmen and children in the area, offered to pay for like stones they brought him.

More than eight hundred individual meteorites, ranging from half an ounce to twenty-five pounds, were gathered as a result, raising the total known weight of the shower from sixty-eight to fourteen hundred pounds.

In primitive Indian hill country in the Mexico of 1928 he located a fine Mexican slash bar, or barreta, and numerous "hammer stones," shaped from the natural alloy of nickel-iron meteorites.

At Haviland, Kansas, careful excavation of a "buffalo wallow" revealed it to be a small meteorite crater, its sides and floor lined with hundreds of varisized, partially disintegrated stones of the beautiful palasite, or stony-iron, type of meteorite. The "waller" had been plowed over and ignored for years.

His largest prize was located on a horseback search near Goose Lake, Oregon. Found on government land and now displayed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., it weighs one and one third tons. It was found miles from human habitation and transportation, but the engineering problems its removal posed couldn't compete with the thrill of the find.

Yet the elusive challenge of 1923—the how and why of every meteor and a teasing “where” for every sky rock hardy enough to survive its incandescent journey—still beckons.

His meteorite museum is a new step in the educational campaign he started nearly twenty-five years ago and which he believes to be the only means of piecing together the mystery of astral bodies.

“I have always considered it vital in the study of meteorites that there be meteorites to study,” he explains.

So from the picture windows of his American Meteorite Museum, the slight, short Dr. Nininger points out for the casual traveler the mile-across crater blasted in the Arizona desert by a baby comet some twenty to fifty thousand years ago.

He shows the visitor pitted, multihundred-pound fragments of the million-ton mass which helped create that hole and from which a hammer tap will bring ringing proof of ninety per cent iron composition. He displays cut nickel-iron slabs whose geometric-patterned figures chart the crystalline structure of the metal.

Or he tells tales of the more common but less easily recognized stony meteorites—relates how farmers or school children have located specimens.

And then Dr. Nininger sends his visitor on his way, hoping that from Minnesota or from Pennsylvania or from Texas he will one day send a meteorite that will add to the world’s fund of scientific knowledge.

Any contribution is a big one to the world’s fund of meteorites. The few which survive travel through the earth’s atmosphere may land in arctic or jungle or desert areas. And of the few which, by the law of averages, fall in inhabited territory, fewer are seen to land.

With a magnetic rake in past years and more recently with a war-surplus mine detector, he has surveyed areas about the

great Arizona crater to determine the extent of fragments scattered when the main mass of the comet swarm of meteorites struck the earth and apparently exploded.

He has spent hours cutting through tough nickel-iron with a band of soft steel, fed carborundum and water to give it bite. He can show you a two-square-foot slice of natural steel which represents 210 man-hours of power-saw cutting time.

Many more hours have been spent at the polishing wheel and in the etching process by which polished pieces are exposed to a weak nitric acid solution. This brings out the patterns which are one of an iron meteorite's trademarks and by which Nininger can identify a specimen as belonging to a particular fall. Like the crystalline construction of a snowflake, the structure of a meteorite or of specimens of one fall of meteorites is never just like that of any other.

Other months of writing have produced millions of words on his favorite subject. Lecture hours have accumulated into months of speaking time, and days of travel into years in the field.

The museum man will leave his display cases at the drop of a fireball across the sky—as he did a few years ago when Coloradans, Kansans, and Nebraskans were startled by an afternoon meteor—to trace the aerial intruder to its destination.

A recent brief trip to Canada yielded two new specimens for the Nininger collection—one an additional twelve-pound palasite of the Springwater, Saskatchewan, fall, the other a small iron which had been found in an Indian grave in Montana.

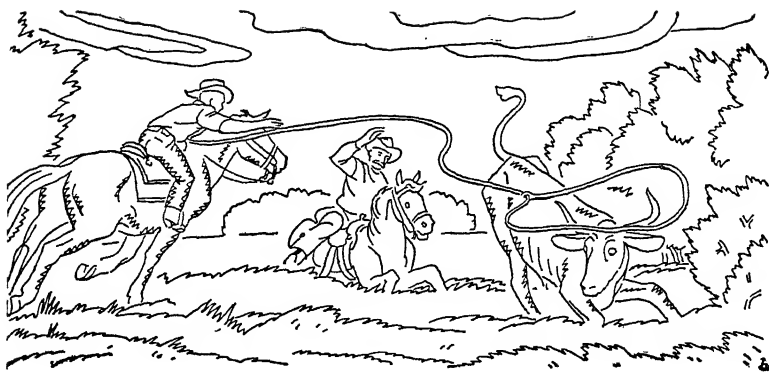
Another new acquisition for the museum is a 224-pound iron located near Rifle, Colorado, and obtained jointly by Nininger and the late Congressman Dean Gillespie, of Denver, who was a noted amateur collector.

Nininger's threefold plan of action—to inform first, in order to find second, in order finally to learn about meteorites—has

resulted in recovery of thousands of the outer-space messengers, by far the greatest contribution of any one man to the world's fund of the sky stones.

Yet his 1923 adventure had been intended only as a scientific lark. And later, when he settled on his plan for wide-scale recovery of meteorites, noted researchers had told him he would be lucky if a lifetime campaign netted a single specimen!

Anyhow, Dr. Nininger believes, the first hundred and fifty finds are the hardest. Located now at the Arizona crater, probably the point on earth where meteorites can least likely be ignored, he expects a share of his future finds to come to him.



## *Last Escape*

BY FRED GIPSON

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The legend of the last of the wild longhorn steers of Texas, an ancient and lordly brute who literally willed himself to death rather than face the loss of his "rattle-hocked" freedom, had held a years-long fascination for Fred Gipson ever since he first heard it from elder members of his own family. Finally he put it together into a great story, which was published in the *Rocky Mountain Empire* magazine while he was a member of its staff, and later reprinted in *Reader's Digest*. (Copyright, 1948, by Fred Gipson. Reprinted by permission.)

IT WAS in the middle of the afternoon when Grandpa Branch's grulla showed up at the corrals, stripped of everything but the bridle. He traveled with his head held sideways to keep from tripping on the bridle reins.

Sight of the horse scared me sick. What had happened to Grandpa Branch?

Into my mind popped the picture of that Mexican vaquero I'd seen at Dog Town the week before, the one whose horse had dragged him to death in the brush. Any time a horse comes in without his rider, ranch folks have plenty of such mental

pictures handy to weaken their insides with dread. I ran to saddle a horse and go look for the remains of Grandpa Branch.

Before I could draw up my saddle cinch, though, Grandpa Branch's remains walked in out of the brush, stooped under the weight of the saddle he packed. He began bawling orders the moment he came in sight.

"Rope me out a fresh horse, Toby," he shouted. "Fetch me another saddle girth and that new hard-twist rope I brung from town yesterday. Then go turn loose that catch-dog. And make a hurry-up job of it all!"

I roped him out a fresh horse and tied it. I ran to the saddle shed and got his new rope and another saddle girth. I wanted mighty bad to know what had happened, but I could tell by the sound of his voice that Grandpa was hopping mad. It was no time to pester him with talk.

He'd buckled on his new girth and was setting his saddle on a big sorrel when I came hurrying up with the blue-ticked hound we used for catching wild hogs and varmints out of the brush.

I couldn't wait any longer. "What's up, Grandpa?" I asked.

Grandpa yanked his black hat down tighter over his head. "That confounded old outlaw steer," he burst out, shaking loose the beads of sweat clinging to the horn tips of his gray mustaches. "He got away again!" He jerked a dirty bandanna from his hip pocket and wiped the sweat off his face.

Stripped of its profanity, Grandpa Branch's story was still an eye opener. Less than a mile downriver from the ranch house he'd accidentally ridden up on that old scalawag longhorn steer that every cowman and ranch hand on the Nueces had been trying to catch or shoot for years.

Before the old outlaw could make it to cover, Grandpa had roped him. But when the steer ran against Grandpa's rope, the strain was too much for the saddle girth. It'd parted, leaving Grandpa to ride his saddle off over his horse's ears.

Well, of course all Grandpa could do was release his end of the rope. You couldn't hold a runaway steer with no horse under your saddle.

"But with a dog to locate him," Grandpa said, "and that rope drag to slow him up, we'll catch that old ladino. We'll show that Pelly bunch whether or not I'm too old for cow work!"

The Pellys owned the next ranch down the Nueces from Grandpa's outfit. They'd always been good friends of Grandpa's till the day one of the younger men hit Grandpa up to sign him on as foreman. He'd told Grandpa that a man seventy-five years old had no business trying to work cattle in the south Texas brasada.

That sure had rankled Grandpa. He'd pointed out to Irv Pelly that he'd been driving mossy horns up the trail when Irv was still wearing diapers.

"And the chances are good that I'll still be doing my own cow work when they're spanking you in the face with a burying spade," he added.

After that Grandpa hadn't much use for the Pellys and did twice the riding he needed to, just proving that he was still as good a saddle hand as ever.

Now Grandpa stuck a scuffed boot into a stirrup and swung up into his saddle. He gave his old black hat another yank and said grimly, "Let's go!" He led off at a gallop down the sandy trail that wound through the thickets bordering the river.

I rode after Grandpa and at my call the catch-dog Rattler came loping along behind.

I rode with excitement mounting inside me. I'd worked cattle in the brush before. Every time I came to visit with Grandpa Branch he had me riding with him. I'd got so I could stick in a saddle and was pretty handy with a rope. But I never had helped to run an outlaw steer.



I'd listened to a lot of tales old-timers told about running brush-wild longhorns in the old days, and it sure had sounded exciting. But all the longhorns were gone now; all the wild ones, that is. They'd been sold off or shot down to help get rid of fever ticks and to make room for better-blooded cattle.

Sometimes you could find the bleached skull and rat-gnawed horns of some old longhorn out in the brush yet. But the only wild one left alive that anybody knew about was just this one old steer. He'd escaped every cow hunt since he was a calf and was now better than twenty years old.

I'd never seen him, but I knew what he looked like from what I'd been told. He was a big old dun steer, long as a fence rail, with a black nose and black stripe running along his backbone. He was lean-flanked, spindle-rumped, but stood fourteen hands high at the shoulders.

His head was huge and he had a set of long curved horns with a spread of more than five feet from tip to tip.

"Them horns ain't ornaments, neither," Jim Doughty of the Running W outfit had stated with conviction. Jim had reason to know. Once he'd crowded the old scalawag into the blind end of a cut-bank draw and got a horse horned to death under him.

Jim claimed that old steer had all the hair worn off his knees from crawling through thickets he couldn't stand upright in. Ples Mobley of the Spanish Bit outfit told how he'd entered one of the old steer's hide-out thickets of mesquite and granjeno and found all the leaves eaten off the brush inside, right out to the edges. The edges, though, were left thick to screen the old ladino from sight.

Dude Chester of the Jinglebob outfit told how the steer grazed mostly at night and stayed bushed up in the thickets of a daytime. "And whenever he lays," Dude said, "you can bank on him having his escape routes all picked out."

I guessed he was plenty wild and smart, all right. I knew there were a lot of Mexican vaqueros who wouldn't run the old steer any more. He'd got away so many times and hurt so many horses and men that they had him figured for some sort of ghost or devil. I guessed it'd sure be a feather in our caps if me and Grandpa Branch could catch him.

Grandpa pulled up at a little clearing in the huisache and mesquite. He got down off his horse and called to Rattler. He bent over a game trail that led through the brush and walked along it, pointing down to the sharp-pointed hoofmarks that were plain beside the snakelike drag of his rope in the sand.

"Sick him, Rattler," he urged. "Go git him, boy!"

Rattler wore his credentials as a catch-dog out in the open. One ear was twisted and crumpled as a lettuce leaf; a wild brush hog had mangled that one. The other was limp as a cow-camp dishrag, slit and frazzle-edged. A Mexican lion had torn it up.

Rattler traveled with a limp, and you could read the rest of his fighting history in the jagged scars marring other parts of his body. He was on to his business.

So when Grandpa pointed out the steer's tracks Rattler went right to work. He sniffed the tracks a time or two, glanced up at Grandpa to make certain it was the steer he wanted trailed and not a coyote that had left some tracks there, too, then wrung his tail and lined out. His trail voice rang through the mesquites, pretty as a bell.

Grandpa hollered encouragement at him, then came running back to mount his horse. "He's got it going," he exclaimed, his black eyes snapping with excitement. "Now, git fixed to do some tall riding, boy!"

I screwed down deeper into my saddle. I checked the chin strings to my hat; I didn't want it torn off by the brush. I buttoned up the front of my jumper. With heavy bullhide chaps

covering my legs and toe fenders on my stirrups to protect my feet, I figured I was all set for running anybody's wild cattle.

The trail led on down the river. Rattler ran it slowly at first, then picked up speed until Grandpa and I were following his ringing voice at a steady trot.

We crossed a clearing, close behind the trailing hound. Up ahead was a big thicket of white brush and tornillo, as thick a tangle of chaparral as there was in the whole brasada. Suddenly, out of the middle of it rose a couple of shiny-winged blackbirds, circling and fussing.

My heart leaped right up into my mouth. We'd jumped our steer. Even before I heard Rattler's voice change I knew we'd jumped him.

Those blackbirds had warned the steer too. They were his sentinels. They rode his back when he grazed and fed on the ticks and lice and mosquitoes that sucked his blood. For this favor they kept a sharp lookout for any danger.

There was a sudden violent crashing inside the thicket. The sounds moved away from us. Rattler's voice lifted high with excitement. Grandpa hooked spurs to his horse, yelling, "Yonder he goes!" And out the other side of the thicket burst the scalawag steer. He had his tail up and his head down and was quitting the thicket in a rattle-hocked run.

I got one quick look at him before he plunged into the next magote. Then he was gone, and right behind him went Rattler, baying at the top of his voice. Hard on Rattler's heels spurred Grandpa, ripping holes in the brush where there weren't any.

My horse bolted, carrying me at a headlong rush into the gap Grandpa Branch had made. I felt my body muscles shrink and tighten as we tore into the first clawing, raking mass of brush.

The brush popped and crackled. It whipped me in the face,

blinding me. It came too fast and too rough and for a few scared seconds there I forgot and shut my eyes and was conscious only of hurtful, crashing motion and the musty, honey-sweet scent of shattered huisache blossoms.

Then a dead branch slammed against my ribs and broke, jarring me to my senses. You don't run wild cattle in the brush with your eyes shut—unless you want to get your brains knocked out.

We burst out into a clearing.

Ahead of me went Grandpa, hanging off his saddle like an Indian, ducking a tangle of retama and chaparro prieto.

"Ay-ee, cimarron," he yelled at the steer in Spanish, then added in English, "I'm right on your tail, you scalawag!"

And he was—almost. But he still wasn't within roping distance. That thirty feet of trailing rope was a drag on the old steer, all right, but he could still travel like a Rio Grande fruit train.

He kept traveling that way, too, from thicket to thicket, mile after mile. He jumped barbwire fences that Grandpa and I had to kick down to get our horses over. He swam the Nueces into the Jinglebob outfit and then back to our side of the river.

He'd have lost me and Grandpa half a dozen times if it hadn't been for Rattler. But he couldn't shake Rattler. That old hound was driving hard and singing loud.

I was ready to call off the chase any time after the first mile. That riding was too rough and wild and reckless to suit me. You couldn't stay in your saddle; you rode all over it and off the sides and down under. You had about as much time as it takes to bat an eyelash to decide which way to dodge and you knew that one false move or bad guess might be your last.

But there was no quitting to Grandpa Branch. This was the way he'd had to ride back in the old days when he'd made his

start by "mavericking in the switches," as he called it, and this was the way he'd keep on riding.

So I fought the brush and stayed with him. I was fifteen. I was getting to be a pretty good brush popper. I couldn't let a man seventy-five years old outride me.

But I was sure glad when just at sundown Rattler brought the steer to bay. We spurred out into a clearing beside the river and found the steer backed up against a motte of live-oak saplings, snorting and lunging at the baying hound.

Just as we rode in sight the old outlaw lifted his head and bellowed his defiance. It was an earsplitting blare that drowned out Rattler's baying and seemed to make the air quiver. It was like no other sound I'd ever heard and there was something in it that made my scalp shift under my hat.

He didn't hesitate about carrying the fight to us. With a quick lunge and wild toss of those vicious horns he made a desperate attempt to gore Rattler, failed, and swung right to rush Grandpa.

It was a swift, deadly charge, and Grandpa's winded horse just barely leaped aside in time to miss getting run through with those horns. At the same instant Grandpa whipped a wide loop down and out in a peculiar backhand cast neat and true as it'd been fifty years ago.

The loop settled around those widespread horns as the outlaw's lunge carried him on past. Grandpa gave the rope a yank to take up the slack and made his dally around the saddle horn, all in one swift motion. There wasn't a better roper in the brasada than Grandpa.

What happened next came so fast I never quite realized how it was. I saw the steer hit the end of the rope and heard Grandpa's rigging shriek with the strain. Then I saw Grandpa's horse rocked sideways and off balance, all four feet flying.

The horse went to his knees, with Grandpa yelling and try-

ing to pull him back on his feet. But he was still half down and off balance when the steer came up with a snort and charged.

If I'd had a second's time to think I'd have known I could never save Grandpa. But there wasn't time to think. I just spurred in and reached down with my loop and picked up both heels of that charging steer. I wheeled my horse away, cutting him in such a short circle that my off-side boot toe scraped dirt. I hauled that fighting longhorn steer off Grandpa and his horse just before those horns ripped into them.

I'd never been any good at heeling a cow brute. I couldn't have pulled that trick again in a thousand tries. But I did it that time.

Grandpa's horse came to his feet at last and Grandpa rode him away from me. Between us we stretched the old longhorn out on the ground. We had him bedded. We'd caught the old brush-wild ladino that had evaded capture for the last fifteen years! The last of the wild ones!

We left the outlaw lying on his side with all four feet tied together around the base of a live-oak sapling. In the morning we'd bring out a gentle bull and neck the wild one to him. Grandpa said that was the only way you could ever bring in an old ladino like that.

"It'll take a bull a day or two to drag him in," Grandpa said. "But he'll do it. And when he does I want to see them Pellys eat crow!"

We rode home in the early darkness, proud and satisfied, while around us the fireflies—"God's little lanterns," as the Mexicans call them—sewed the brush together with burning threads.

Next morning I was up while the coyotes were still singing for daylight. I was sore and stiff but eager to go help Grandpa neck the old scalawag steer to the lead bull. It was sure going

to be fine when we got him penned and could show him off to all the brush poppers who'd failed to get him.

It was going to make good listening, too, when Grandpa told how I'd picked up that steer's heels and saved his life.

I found Grandpa in the kitchen ahead of me. He was eating his usual "Mexican breakfast" of black coffee and cigarettes. He sat hunched over the table, and in the yellow lamplight I could see his fierce old eyebrows pulled together in a worried frown. His eyes looked raw, too, like maybe he hadn't slept.

"Boy," he said, "I been thinking!"

He paused then and I said, "Yes, sir," and he waited a while longer before he went on.

"I been thinking about that old outlaw steer," he said. "Thought about him half the night."

He sipped his coffee and frowned. "Well, dang it," he said, "far as I know, he's the last one. The last old wild longhorn out of the bunch Cabeza de Vaca and them other old Spanish boys started with—cattle they let get away here in the brush."

He glared up at me suddenly. "Do you know," he said, "that that was around four hundred years ago? Do you know them old cattle has lived here in the brush all that time, fighting panther and bear and wolf? Getting wilder and more numerous in spite of the ticks and mosquitoes and lice?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "I read about it in a book!"

"You read about it in a book!" he flared. "Boy, I worked them cattle. I gathered them out of this brush. I trailed them from the Rio Grande to the Injun reservation in Montana. I seen them build towns like Dodge City and Abilene. They made a cow country out of Texas and fed this old nation when there was no other meat to be had!"

He broke off and stared down at the red-checked tablecloth and shook his head slowly. "And now they're all gone," he said hoarsely. "And all the good men and good horses that worked

them. All wiped out by the times. Nothing left but bone dust and recollections."

I stood and stared at Grandpa. I'd never seen him worked up like this before, not to where he'd make a regular speech. I couldn't figure it out.

"Yes, sir," I said. That's all I knew to say.

He got up suddenly and went and threw his coffee grounds out of his cup into the yard. "Well, dang it," he said, "I'm gonna do it! I'm gonna go turn that old longhorn loose and let him live out his time in the brush. Where he belongs!"

That nearly took my breath. I couldn't believe it. "But, Grandpa!" I protested. "What about Irv Pelly?"

Grandpa wheeled and roared at me. "Irv Pelly!" he shouted. "What's he got to do with it? That blowhard won't ever git close enough to that old steer to even touch him with a rope!"

When Grandpa started shouting at you like that it was time to hush. I went out and saddled our horses.

The sentinel blackbirds had located the steer by the time we rode into the clearing where he was tied down. At our approach they rose from the top of the live-oak sapling, crying out a warning. But the old outlaw steer didn't try to get up. He lay in the same position we'd left him the night before—mighty still, it seemed to me.

Grandpa noticed it, too, I guess, for he set spurs to his horse and loped ahead. He was sitting in his saddle and staring down at the old longhorn when I rode up.

"We killed him, Toby!" he said in a hoarse voice.

There was a note of hurt in Grandpa's voice, too, and I looked up at him instead of at the steer. Grandpa's face was too gray and seemed like the skin wrinkles were deeper than I ever saw them.

"But I don't understand it!" he complained. "That old steer's been run harder and longer than we run him yesterday. And



we never broke him up none when we roped him. But here he lays, ready for the coyotes!"

Dead, the old steer didn't look so big. Seemed like his hide had shrunk, like the skin on Grandpa's face.

"I guess he was just too wild to stand capture, Grandpa," I said. "I've read where some wild things just sort of will themselves to die when they're caught!"

Grandpa looked up at me and said in an awed voice: "You reckon that's what he done?" A light leaped into his eyes and he straightened in his saddle. "That's it," he said. "He done it a-purpose! One way or another, he was bound to give us the slip—and he's outsmarted us again." His voice lowered. "Looks like he's escaped for good this time."

With that, Grandpa wheeled his horse suddenly and rode off, blowing his nose into his dirty bandanna.

That evening he sent me down to the Pelly ranch to see if Irv Pelly was still interested in running Grandpa's outfit till I got big enough to take over. Grandpa said that when a brush popper got careless enough to let a steer jerk a horse down under him like he'd done yesterday it was time to drag in his rope and sack his saddle.



## *Padre of the San Juan*

BY MARIAN TALMADGE AND IRIS GILMORE

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Iris Gilmore and Marian Talmadge, instructors at the University of Denver, like to poke about in off-trail places whenever they can get away from the classroom. On one such trip they met "The Drag-Robe," an Episcopalian pastor who gave up a fashionable Connecticut church to minister to one of the world's loneliest and most far-flung parishes in the Utah Indian country.

IT'S THE only road—you can't miss it," we were told at Bluff when inquiring the way to St. Christopher's Mission to the Navajo. The mission, blending into the weather-worn bluffs of the narrow San Juan River valley, stands at the northern rim of the Navajo reservation. It is a hundred and fifty miles from the nearest railroad, fifty miles from a highway, twenty-five miles from the nearest source of lumber, and a couple of miles from the tiny community of Bluff in the southeastern corner of Utah.

The mission itself is of red sandstone, surrounded by corrals and a few Navajo hogans. Cottonwoods and a neat vegetable garden form a brilliant green contrast against the high red bluffs along the river.

St. Christopher's Mission was founded by the Reverend H. Baxter Liebler, Episcopal clergyman, to help the Navajos adjust to conditions thrust upon them by the white man.

At fifty-six Father Liebler is one of the best-known figures of the Southwest. Anywhere in this "Four Corners" region the padre's black frock coat and flat-topped felt hat are well known: in Blanding, Utah, where he goes for supplies; in Cortez, Colorado, for repairs for the old Ford pickup; in Tuba City, Arizona, where he takes sick Navajos for treatment; or at Fort Defiance, Arizona, dickering with the United States Indian Service.

This is the rector who in 1943 gave up a fashionable parish in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. He receives no pay, only his food and clothes—"mostly old ones." In this desert country every drop of water counts, so his robes are often dusty, his shoes are worn, the cuffs of his frock coat frayed, and his shirt is patched in many places.

"Almost from the first I was greeted by the name the Indians gave me," he told us. "The Navajos were politely amused at my clerical garb and affectionately dubbed me *Ee'niishoodi*—"The One Who Drags His Robe" or "The Drag-Robe."

Tanned to a leather brown, The Drag-Robe presents a striking appearance in his flowing black cassock. His once dark hair, now threaded with gray, is worn long and tied back in Navajo fashion with a bright purple ribbon.

Lacking barbering facilities for months, his hair grew long. The Indians were favorably impressed. Fearing he would lose caste with them, the padre changed his hairdress permanently.

Father Liebler's figure is silhouetted against the mission many times each day, ringing the old locomotive bell, calling the Navajos to church, to school, for trips to town, or for emergencies.

He hustles about the grounds, helping with the chores, hoe-

ing the garden, instructing the Navajos in silverwork, teaching songs to the children, kneeling in prayer before the altar, or sitting at his portable pecking out letters.

His long fingers are deft at designing a sand painting or planting alfalfa. He speaks with equal ease the language of the horse trader or the connoisseur, the dry farmer or the irrigation expert, the tourist or the Indian shepherd.

While on vacation back in the summer of 1942 Father Liebler trekked across the Navajo reservation on an Indian pony.

He was disturbed by what he saw. Behind the conditions he found was the impact of the white man's way on a minority group. Here were miserable huts made of logs and mud with only a smoke hole for a chimney. Whole families—often numbering a dozen persons—lived in the single room of the hogan.

These were the Navajos who, after the peace treaty of 1868 with the United States Government, returned to the red rock country and the wild beauty of the desert. They built their homes near water holes which promised forage for sheep and scanty irrigation for corn, melons, and squash. Their flocks grew.

The only river, the San Juan, supplies the water. The rest of the reservation is semiarid, a bleak, rugged plateau land, fiercely broken by canyons. Rainfall is scanty. High temperatures during summer and subzero weather during winter, high winds, frequent sandstorms, and high evaporation rates are characteristic of the area.

Erosion has taken a heavy toll of Navajo land. This condition, with drought and overgrazing, forced Uncle Sam to curtail sharply the Navajo herds.

Father Liebler saw that the flocks were being reduced below the subsistence point. The government had neglected to educate the Navajos. This left the Indian unfitted for other work.

Generations of improvidence had left the Navajos without foresight. A Navajo would buy a bale of hay, open it for his horses, throw away the wire. A week later he would be begging some baling wire to fix his wife's loom.

Father Liebler wrote back home to Connecticut: "I've got to stay. It's unbelievable that human beings are living such underprivileged lives in our great country. In this Bluff area the Navajos seem the most primitive. Not a school, not a church, not a hospital in fifteen hundred square miles!"

As the padre stood on the banks of the San Juan and gazed thoughtfully toward the vast trackless reservation he had just covered he said to himself:

"God has brought me here to realize the need of these people." He gave his spiritual bootstraps a tug and his Yankee ingenuity whispered: "A mission here could perform miracles. I'll build one. It'll be a mission to serve the 'whole man'—body, mind, and spirit—because you can't preach the gospel to the hungry and tell them to be warmed and clothed."

Father Liebler soon realized he couldn't build the mission alone. He explains: "Father Clement, Brother Juniper, and Brother Michael, members of an Episcopal brotherhood, became interested and joined me. Helen Sturges, whose work with many minority groups recommended her, cast her lot with us to become the teacher.

"We chose this spot on the San Juan because an abundance of vegetation in a high crevasse in the canyon wall showed a seepage which could be developed into a spring. Water in this desert country is more precious than gold.

"And, too, part of the common room—the walls up to the window tops, evidently all that remained of an old trading post—were there. The staff lived in tents our first season while we built the mission."

The common room, the main gathering place, has a hard-

packed dirt floor and is furnished with crude wooden benches and tables made of two-by-four wooden horses with slabs for tops. Huge piñon logs crackling in the oversize native stone fireplace give a pungent fragrance to the air.

A single remnant of a luxurious yesterday "back home" is the brass candle sconce. A portable typewriter of ancient vintage, partially hidden by stacks of old newspapers, magazines, and unanswered mail sits on the edge of a table. A few plank bookshelves augmented by orange crates hold books and papers.

Open house on the desert is every day. No welcome sign is needed for the Navajos. They wander in and out of the common room at will, thumbing through well-worn books and outdated magazines.

Knives, tools, bits of silver, and lumps of turquoise liven a corner where Father Liebler directs the Navajo youth in the ancient art of silver craft. He considers this silverwork a "must" because of the changing conditions these people face.

To the padre it soon became obvious that the few schooled Navajos he met knew their rights and were not easily coerced or cheated because of ignorance.

The Navajos' experience in World War II made them eager for schooling. Many Navajos tried to enlist. A large majority were rejected because of illiteracy. Their pride was hurt. Some of the tribe leaders came to Father Liebler and said: "Our children must have schools so they can learn to read and write."

Perhaps there is no schoolhouse anywhere like the one at St. Christopher's. The building, a former CCC shack lent by Uncle Sam, was the largest that could be trucked from Blanding, Utah, through narrow Cow Canyon. The blackboards are painted wallboard; discarded automobile maps are used for teaching geography; dog-eared *National Geographics* become

reference books; a few well-thumbed textbooks—no two alike—are carefully preserved.

The writing of Navajo as well as English attracts the attention of visitors at once. The Lord's Prayer in Navajo hangs conspicuously on the wall.

Whole families come to school. The tot of three sits next to a grandfather of sixty-three. There aren't any baby-sitters on the reservation so the mothers bring their infants strapped to cradleboards and line them up against the wall.

When we visited the school the shack was filled with sound as the Navajo pupils sang: ". . . land of the free and the home of the brave . . . Land where our fathers died . . ."

It was almost a travesty when we remembered that this is the poor land for which their fathers had died—died protecting their homes and families against encroachment of troops carrying the Stars and Stripes.

Twice a year the staff pitches in at the medical and dental clinic which Father Liebler organized under the supervision of the Indian Service doctor. Ears are probed, aching teeth extracted or filled, antitoxins given, festering sores cauterized by the dozen.

Trachoma treatments are a full-time nurse's job, only there isn't one! A touching sight are the little children holding their own eyes open to receive the painful treatment.

Mustache Begay—called "Big Stash" by the padre—was at first one of the most stubborn objectors to medical help. Big Stash is one of the few "capitalists" of the reservation. He shows his wealth by a mouthful of gold teeth, a well-dressed wife, and a number of well-fed children.

After Father Liebler removed a cactus thorn from the Stash baby's badly swollen leg, relations with Big Stash improved. Now the latter brings his fine wagon to the clinic and uses it to haul sick Navajos in to the mission.

The chapel at St. Christopher's adjoins the common room. The walls are red stone plastered with mud; the floor is red shale with a few brightly patterned Navajo rugs to kneel upon. Unfinished pine benches complete the little room.

A white Navajo blanket covers the coarse pine-board altar. Above the altar the roof slants because in this country the rare but furious rains must be run off quickly to avoid damage. The ceiling of the chapel is made of cottonwood sticks laid close together over pine-tree rafters and follows the queer slant of the roof overhead.

The Indians eagerly awaited the first confirmation Sunday. Several creaking wagonloads, complete with cradleboarded infants squalling loudly, arrived during the service. The padre had quite a time getting Daniel in and out of the lion's den with all the sound effects.

A barbecue followed. The women lighted a large fire in the mission yard and soon had pails of venison stewing furiously and mutton spitting over hot coals.

Father Liebler looked about and discovered Jennie and George—bride and groom—had just arrived. George had been baptized just the day before, and Jennie had been looking forward to confirmation for a long time. Why had they missed it?

"At first," the padre says, "I was inclined to be angry. But in time I realized I had underestimated the power of a Navajo taboo.

"Jennie's mother was among those confirmed—no Navajo man may look at or converse with his mother-in-law, according to their custom. The embarrassment of going to the altar with his mother-in-law would have been too much. So George just did the polite thing—he stayed away, and his bride with him."

After a hurried conference the padre told them he would "do" them that evening after vespers. At sundown they came



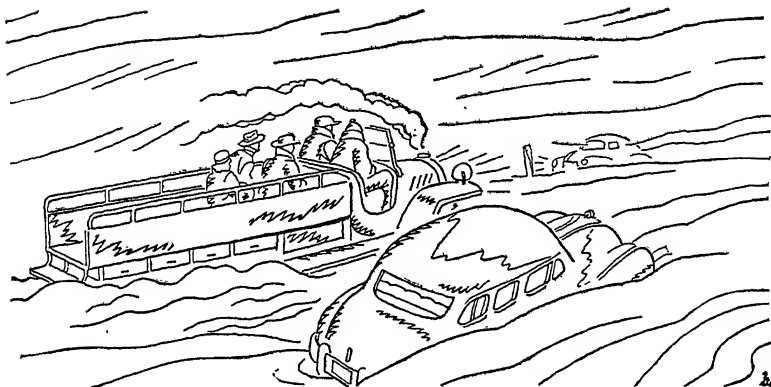
and with them Jennie's young brother, who was shepherd for the day.

That evening, gathering up their belongings and riding or walking away, many of the Navajos called out, "*Ahe-he, ahe-he,*" meaning "Thank you," and sometimes they said, "Sank you berry moach!" which is unusual for the Navajo, who are not prone to expressing gratitude verbally.

The Drag-Robe watched their silhouettes disappear in the desert twilight. The bright purple, red, and yellow of the skirts and blouses made a rainbow against the cold winter sky.

The bright evening star shone down on the red stone mission—the mission where these Navajos could learn to count, hammer at a piece of silver and a chunk of turquoise, receive help for their physical needs, and learn something of a new way of life. The Drag-Robe smiled. Perhaps he was thinking:

"Yes, the mission must serve the whole man—body, mind, and spirit—because you can't preach the gospel to the hungry and tell them to be warmed and clothed."



## *Wellington's Trial by Blizzard*

BY BILL HOSOKAWA

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When the century's worst blizzard struck tiny Wellington, Colorado, its citizens quickly saw their job and "went ahead and done it." That voluntary and unhesitating action—patrolling the snow-lashed highway for stranded motorists—resulted in the rescue of nearly a hundred persons, probably saving the lives of a sizable percentage of them. The rapid mobilization was the spontaneous reaction of a rural community meeting an emergency. "Wellington's Trial by Blizzard" is a heart-warming tale of a people who haven't lost their heritage of pioneer courage and initiative.

SUNDAY, January 2, 1949, dawned clear and crisp like many another winter day for the 580 citizens of Wellington, Colorado. Breaths turned frosty in the air, and coal smoke from the white frame houses plumed high before it was shredded by vagrant currents.

It looked like just another unexciting day in the life of an unexciting town—the only town along the fifty-six-mile stretch of U. S. Highway 85 between Fort Collins and Cheyenne, Wyoming.

There was nothing to portend that within hours the entire

community would be cast in the middle of a savage, primitive drama of man against the elements; that Wellington would react with magnificent pioneer courage and initiative. Nothing, perhaps, except a thin line of clouds that took shape and began to gain ominous substance on the distant northern horizon.

Shortly before noon Mrs. Floyd Havens, wife of the town marshal, noticed a wind had sprung up. A few snowflakes clung to her coat when she went out to greet some visitors.

At 2 P.M. Wilson Leeper stopped to light a cigarette while taking inventory at the Wallen grocery. A steady wind sweeping off the hills to the north was driving the snow horizontally and the temperature was dropping rapidly. Wilson found it hard to see the post office across the street.

A little while later Harmon Wich at the Lincoln Highway Garage got word that Leo Tolle's car had skidded into a ditch somewhere up the highway. Harmon grumbled a little, warmed up his wrecker, slipped into his heavy clothes, decided to take along Donald, his eleven-year-old son for company, and started out into the blizzard.

About 4 P.M. Leeper noticed a state highway patrol car heading north. An hour later he saw it come back and disappear toward Fort Collins. Afterward he learned a passing trucker had pulled the patrol car out of a drift where it had bogged down. Things were getting worse up on the hill.

Shortly after dark Bob Eyestone, superintendent of schools and basketball coach, walked through the storm to Charlie's Inn to see Charlie Thompson, chief of the volunteer fire department. Several other firemen were already there, having a few beers and talking about the blizzard.

"What do you think, Charlie?" Eyestone asked. "There might be some people in trouble up the road. Do you figure we ought to take a run up there?"

Charlie reckoned maybe they ought to, and then again maybe

it wasn't necessary. Any damn fool would know enough to stay off the highway on a night like this.

While they were debating someone dashed in with the news that Harmon Wich and his tow truck hadn't come back.

Now there was no hesitation. Eyestone went to the telephone and spoke to several townspeople. He gave no orders, voiced no pleas; he just made a series of simple reports on the situation.

Within a few minutes nearly a dozen men—heavily clothed, tight-lipped and grim-faced—had slipped in to Charlie's place.

One of them was asked what his wife had said about his venturing out.

"She didn't want me to go," he replied. "But I asked what she'd want the boys to do if I was out there on the hill. Then she said: 'You go ahead.' Here I am."

Some days after this episode Charlie Thompson made a remark that explains this rapid, informal mobilization. He said: "There was a job to do, so we went ahead on our own hook and done it." As simple as that.

As the men assembled, Charlie telephoned the state highway patrol at Fort Collins. "We think there are some people in trouble north of here," he said. "We want to go out and get them, and we'd like to have one of your cars so we'll have two-way radio communication. It's pretty rough out tonight."

The reply was clear-cut. The highway patrol had no cars it could spare. The Wellington volunteer fire department was on its own.

Six big men, including Hank Wich, Harmon's one-armed uncle, piled into a sedan. Three others got into Dan Gregory's four-wheel drive truck. Town Marshal Havens wanted to go, too, but it was decided he should keep an eye on things at home.

Gregory's truck led the way. The first few miles were easy.

Then the caravan met the full rage of the blizzard screaming unimpeded across the treeless prairie, flinging snow with sand-blast force. Headlight beams bounced off this dancing, racing, shrieking wall of wind and snowflakes and diffused quickly into the night's frigid void. At twenty yards the headlights were invisible. The cars crawled forward, the truck in the lead and the sedan clinging desperately to its taillight.

After a while Gregory gave up trying to see through the windshield. He propped his door open, crouched in its shelter on the running board, and steered by looking straight down at the white line along the center of the wind-swept highway. When he lost that line he'd stop and walk around until he located it again.

The first stalled car was a station wagon with a lone woman in it. They picked her up, numb with cold and fear, and put her in the sedan.

A short distance farther on was another car stuck fast in a drift. Working more by feel than sight, Gregory pulled the car free and it was sent on to Wellington with the woman.

Fifteen miles north of Wellington a drift blocked the road completely. It was impossible to tell how long the drift was, or how many cars were in its frozen grip. Head down, gasping for breath, the rescuers tumbled out of their cars and into the storm. The feeble glow of flashlights picked out several automobiles up to their hoods in wind-packed snow. There was no hope of digging them free while the wind continued.

But now the rescuers themselves were in trouble. Snow was driving through the radiators of both truck and sedan and melting. Ignition wires became wet, shorted out. Motors coughed, barely limped along on two and three cylinders. They might conk out for good at any moment.

While the drivers nursed their choking motors the others struggled from car to car, hammering on windows and shout-

ing encouragement. To their amazement they found the strandeers in good condition—cold, cramped, and hungry, but in no immediate danger.

It was obvious the rescuers could gain nothing by staying at the drift. If they delayed much longer they, too, would be marooned. The three strandeers suffering most were helped to the rescue car and the others were left with promise of aid as soon as possible.

Harmon Wich was still missing. Leo Tolle and his family hadn't been located either. They might be out somewhere in that white wilderness. They might have taken shelter at some isolated ranch house.

But now only the truck was running. Dan Gregory passed a tow chain to the sedan and started slowly back to Wellington with his motor sputtering fitfully under the double load—a weary, half-frozen cavalcade. It was 2 A.M. when they pulled up in front of Charlie's Inn.

Within an hour a second rescue party was on its way up the hill. This time it was better equipped, although many of the men on the first trip went back up again. Al Groth, the feed dealer, brought along his two six-by-six war surplus trucks. The highway department truck headquartered in Wellington, its ignition system protected by hastily improvised inner-tube rubber, was also pressed into service.

Dawn brought no respite for the rescuers. Gusts of wind blew an estimated sixty miles an hour and the snow drifted in as quickly as a shovelful was moved. The wind and flying snow would make eyes water, Eyestone recalled afterward, and in a few moments they would freeze shut. Breathing was an effort. Ice formed in the nostrils and it felt as if a man's lungs would freeze.

It took until noon to reach the end of the drift, which was a quarter mile long. Fifteen cars were stuck in it. One sedan had

nine persons, including a six-week-old infant, and a dog in it. Harmon Wich and his son were among those in the drift.

Later one of the rescued said: "I never heard sweeter words than when somebody knocked on the frosted window and said: 'Are you all right? We'll be back for you.'"

As rapidly as possible the stranded cars were emptied, and the occupants, some chattering with cold, were bundled up and sent back to town.

Wellington meanwhile was preparing for trouble. Word gets around rapidly in a small community. An emergency station was set up at the American Legion Hall. Women who only a year earlier had taken a first-aid course manned a receiving depot. The jail was stripped of pads to be used for mattresses. A mattress from the fire station was moved to the hall. Cots were set up. Other women brought in wool blankets and sheets. There had been no word from the second rescue party and the town was prepared for the worst.

Dr. A. B. Monroe, of Fort Collins, marooned at an outlying ranch where he had been visiting, called in and offered his services. A tractor was sent after him.

Jess Angell, who kept Mary's Café open thirty-seven hours while the rescue was under way, sent over gallons of coffee, great pots of soup, and stacks of sandwiches. Freda Carlson, the postmaster's wife, established a registry.

Everything was ready when the first of the strandeers was brought in. A receiving line had been set up. First the victim's shoes and stockings were taken off and his feet wrapped in a warm blanket. Then his coat was removed, and another blanket wrapped around his shoulders.

Other attendants brought up mugs of steaming coffee and bowls of hot soup. Then Dr. Monroe made a careful examination for freezing, frostbite, exhaustion, and shock.

At the end of the line was a group of housewives ready to

take these persons—all complete strangers—to their homes where warm beds awaited them.

The rescued responded quickly to the spirit of Wellington. Those who needed only food and warmth to revive them soon were bustling around helping others. There was always need for another pair of hands to help with the foot-rubbing.

Charlie Thompson says, "There wasn't a home in town that had space that didn't call in and offer a bed." Mrs. Havens put it another way: "We gave everything we had—time, food, and housing. Whoever had it gave it."

Including the travelers who had been stranded in Wellington itself, some hundred and twenty-five motorists from fifteen states were cared for by the townsfolk. This influx was a severe drain on Wellington's food supply, especially since stocks hadn't been replenished after the two-day New Year week end.

Wallen's grocery sold some of its food at cost, made many outright donations. Jess Angell served everyone whether he had funds or not. (Several strangers who couldn't pay for their meals later sent checks to Jess.)

In homes the women guests helped with the cooking and housekeeping as soon as they were able, while the men ventured down to the grocery and brought back what they could find. On Monday Sheriff Ray M. Barger came up from Collins behind a snowplow with milk and supplies. That helped a lot.

Monday afternoon it quit snowing, but the wind continued unabated. (It was to be Wednesday before the blowing stopped.)

Cars had shuttled between Wellington and the drift most of Monday, but no one had been able to explore the highway north of the blockade. Late that afternoon two cars set out on this mission.

Four Wellington men—Wilson Leeper, Leonard Rodarmel, Ray Allen, and Douglas Crane—were in one car. The other was



a coupé driven by two men from Loveland, Colorado, searching for the parents of one of them. They were outfitted for the cold with heavy clothing and plastic masks that shielded their faces from the knife-edged wind. No one thought to ask their names.

It was dark when they parked near the spot where fifteen abandoned cars stood half buried, slowly filling with snow that sifted through minute cracks. The Loveland men trudged up the road five bitter miles before they were forced to turn back. They found nothing.

Through the flying snow the Wellington group saw a dim blob of light marking a ranch house a hundred yards off the road. There they found Leo Tolle, his wife, mother-in-law, and two children. All were unharmed and resting comfortably.

But Leo was worried about his oldest boy, Marvin, eleven, his brother-in-law, Al Glassburn, and his wife, and another couple who had been with the Glassburns.

The Tolles and the Glassburns had been driving into Wellington together from the little crossroads of Carr. When Tolle's car went into the ditch Glassburn had taken young Marvin and had attempted to get back to Carr. They had been unreported since.

When the rescuers got back to the drift the Wellington car wouldn't start. All six rode back to town in the Loveland coupé.

Tuesday was the worst day. A raging ground blizzard piled up new drifts, cut visibility to zero. Stock was dying on the range. The men of Wellington met and named Al Groth to direct their efforts. Another expedition was sent up the highway, just to be sure no one had been overlooked.

By noon Wednesday, seventy-two hours after the storm struck, the wind began to die down. Twenty volunteers went up to the drift to shovel the cars free and tow them to Wellington.

Meanwhile Bill Campton, superintendent of the North Poudre Irrigation Company, put a ton of cement in the back of his pickup truck for ballast and started for Cheyenne with Wilson Leeper and Carl Iwasaki, a *Life* magazine photographer from Denver. It took them four hours to drive forty-six miles. They shoveled and bucked through small drifts and went around the big ones. It took another three hours to get back.

Near the Wyoming border they found the abandoned Glassburn car and learned the occupants had been rescued only a few hours earlier by a party from the Warren ranch. Five persons, including eleven-year-old Marvin, had been stranded in the car since Sunday—almost seventy hours—without serious ill effects. The frost was an inch thick on the glass inside the vehicle.

Back in Wellington the town's guests, properly thawed, were settling down to make the best of their enforced vacation. Teen-agers kept the Legion Hall's juke box working overtime. Townsfolk brought out their playing cards and tables, and bridge helped while the hours away. Some wandered down to the high school to watch Wellington's crack basketball team work out. An amateur stage show was planned.

Crews working north from Fort Collins cleared the road to Wellington on Wednesday. The highway to Cheyenne was finally opened Thursday by Wellington volunteers. The town's guests were ready to move on, but not before profuse and tearfully sincere thanks had been expressed.

The Corn family from Limon, Colorado, rescued with their two children, said: "If there's anything that we can ever do for the people of Wellington, they can count on us."

The Bowmans from Pine Bluff, Wyoming, declared: "There isn't another town that would have done all this for us."

The sentiment heard most often was: "If it weren't for you fellows we certainly would have frozen to death."

Almost without exception the guests wanted to pay their hosts. That's where Wellington drew the line, firmly but kindly. The townsfolk even declined pay for towing the cars in. "We weren't doing this to make money," they said.

One insistent guest finally tossed five ten-dollar bills on his host's table and dashed away.

Mrs. Walter Benninghoven, of Hawk Springs, Wyoming, felt so deeply about Wellington's hospitality that she wrote to the Fort Collins *Coloradoan*, saying in part: "We will not soon forget the kindness and generosity of these Wellington people and the risk taken by the men who spent many hours without rest in the rescue work."

What did their uncommon neighborliness cost Wellington? Not one of the many persons with whom this reporter talked would hazard a guess. It hadn't occurred to them to add up the cost of those dreadful days in dollars.

Actually the material cost is imponderable. No one was paid or even thought of being reimbursed for the gasoline expended, the chains worn out, the food dispensed, the job time lost. Whatever the expenditure, Wellingtonians seem to feel well repaid by the satisfaction of having measured up to an emergency.

Having done their duty as they saw it, Wellingtonians slipped back quickly to their prosaic routine. The hero's mantle ill fits their shoulders. Most of them are like Charlie Thompson, who says:

"I hope we never have anything like that storm again as long as I live, and as long as my children and their grandchildren live. I never realized anything could be so bad."

There was one sad note. Phillip Roman, his wife Ione, and their two children had been found frozen to death near Rock-

port on Highway 85, which parallels Highway 87 some ten miles to the east. They apparently had succumbed as they struggled to their ranch house from their stalled car.

The Romans had lived in Wellington until a few years ago. They were a well-liked family. Somehow it hurt Wellingtonians to have four of their own taken while they were struggling so valiantly for others.



## *High Lonesome Place*

BY FRED GIPSON

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Partly autobiographical, this gem would be technically classed as fiction and the only such in this volume. It is included because, with the simplicity and stature of a classic, this story discloses the deep, irresistible impulses which send a boy away from his family hearth. Such is the quest of everyone who ever left home to come to the mountains and feel the heady exhilaration of a high lonesome place.

**I**T COME to me that morning in the cornfield that this was the time to go. Before I'd hoed to the end of my first row I knewed I couldn't put it off no longer. I had to go to the mountain.

It was the kind of a day, I guess, a prowling sort of May morning that was fresh and alive with soft stirrings. Dewdrops hung like white beads from the tips of the corn blades; they fell in showers from the careless weeds I cut, wetting my bare feet and making them cool. Out on the prairies the blue quail called from the tall grass. In the sky big restless thunderheads milled, threatening rain.

And out yonder on the rim of the world stood the round,

flat-topped mountain, tall and blue in the distance, calling, "Come on, Cotton! Come on!"

It was Saturday morning. At daylight Papa had hitched his work mules to the wagon and pulled out to town for provender. And while I finished breakfast Mama was getting set to spend the day inside, working up a bolt of dress goods she'd laid off a month ago. Nobody would miss me before dinnertime, anyhow.

I thought about those big careless weeds that needed cutting. I thought of the hiding Papa would give me when I got back. I'd pestered Papa about going to the mountain before, and he'd said I was too little. He'd said, "Cotton, you get to prowling way off from home like that and I'll set the seat of your britches to smoking!" And he'd do it, too; there wasn't any bluff to Papa.

These thoughts come to my mind and didn't no more dent it than the shadow of a buzzard's wing dents the prairie. From the time five years back when I'd climbed to the top of that sun-hard manure pile in the cow lot and got my first look at the mountain shivering in the heat waves, I'd knowed the time would come when I'd have to go prowl it. And now it was here. The weeds could take the corn and Papa could wear my tail end down to the bones, but I still had to go.

Time I finished out the row, I was cutting weeds almost in a run. I was that anxious to get gone. I pitched my hoe down and scooted under the fence.

The prairie grass stood tall on the other side, almost up to the frazzled brim of my straw hat. I stood in it and looked back toward the house once, then took out along a cow trail that wound in and out of a cut-banked draw toward some water hole out on the prairie.

The trail dust was soft and powdery underfoot. It held the tracks of the wild things fine. A fox had been along there last

night and an old muddle-headed possum. And farther on I saw where a big old he-coon had followed this trail awhile, leaving tracks you couldn't have told from a year-old baby's. Come winter, I'd trap some of them scamps. Get me some Christmas money!

Off to the side of the trail stood a scrubby mesquite with a road runner sitting in the top of it. That old bird waited till I was close enough to suit him, then flew out and lit in the trail to run it ahead of me. I watched how smooth he ran and thought how ragged-looking he flew and wondered why that old lizard eater ever bothered to fly at all. Seemed like I'd be ashamed to fly at all, if I couldn't beat what he done.

His tracks in the dust looked just like the letter K in my schoolbook, only the right one was turned around backwards.

I slowed down to see if he wanted to play, and he did. About fifty steps ahead, he slowed down too. I stopped and he stopped. He cocked an eye over his back till I got set and made a run at him, then he lifted his wings a little and really toed the dust. But when I slowed to a trot he slowed up, too, keeping just about the same safe distance ahead.

He led me better than a mile. Then he came to a fork in the trail and stopped, trying to make up his mind which one I aimed to take. I kept coming, crowding him, and finally he headed up the trail to the left, the one that stayed with the draw. When I got to the fork I made like I aimed to follow, then cut to the right and ran, hollering and laughing. Sure had me a big joke on that old road runner.

Where this trail topped the next rise of the prairie I got sidetracked into the tall grass by a clicking, rustling sound. I didn't know what it was. I stalked it plenty careful, all set to duck for cover in case it was something scary. But it was just a couple of old dry-land terrapins fighting.

I guess they was fighting; I don't know for sure. They was

just going round and round in their heavy, slow way, each one trying to shove a horny head under the other. Best I could tell, what they had in mind was to turn each other upside down.

They didn't pay me no mind and I got closer and closer, and finally squatted down on my heels right over them, nearly. I wanted to see what come next, after one had finally put the other one on his back.

But I never did learn. The fight went on and on till I was tired and the sun got to burning my back and I recollected the mountain again. That jerked me to my feet, and the terrapins saw me. Both stopped and lifted their heads and stared at me and then set to sneaking back into their shells.

I was through with them, anyhow. I was looking toward the mountain. Seemed like it ought to be closer, now that I'd come so far. I looked back toward the house. I was a long ways off, all right. I guessed this mountain was just farther away than I figured. Better get to humping it if I aimed to make it there and back today.

I set a straight course and held it, walking steady. I kept my mind right on the mountain so I wouldn't hear or see nothing else and piddle off a lot of time. I didn't aim to stop again, but I did.

It was a big old tarantula. We met in a bend in the trail and I come close to jumping out from under my hat, trying to keep from setting a foot on him. He fell back, too, a big old black-legged booger, all shaggy with yellow hair. He lifted up some front legs and waved them at me, daring me to come on. But I wouldn't take him up on it.

Ojeno Morales, the Macy outfit's shepherd, he'd told me one time how a tarantula-bit Mexican swelled up and turned blue all over and died with the slobbering fits. I guessed that was a lie—Ojeno's yarns mostly were. But I wasn't taking no chances.



I backed up and got me a rock to bust him with, but I was too late. The biggest kind of a wasp-looking thing beat me to it. He had a black body and yellow wings and he dipped down out of nowhere and lit in the middle of the tarantula and humped his back and socked a stinger right into the big spider.

That stinger must have been red hot, from the fits that tarantula started having. He jumped this way and that and tried to claw the air with every foot at the same time. But the big wasp had done turned him loose and was circling in the air above him. The tarantula kept running in circles till the poison hit him good, then he stopped and had a chill and finally started drawing his shaking legs in close to his body.

Right there before my eyes that old tarantula just shriveled up to nearly nothing. And that's when the big wasp with the yellow wings come in and picked him up and flew off with him.

I'd never seen a sight like that before. I stood and watched till the wasp and his tarantula was nothing but a black speck in the air; then I went on, feeling good all over. I'd seen a thing today that grown folks would listen to the telling of.

That mountain, it was a sneaky thing, the way it kept moving off ahead of me. Worse than that old road runner. I walked and I walked and I still couldn't tell for sure that I was any closer. Finally I played a trick on it too. I'd set my course and start walking, looking in every direction but toward the mountain. That way, when I'd kept my eyes off it long enough and then looked, I could tell I was gaining.

The sun got hotter and hotter and the sweat started running down back of my ears, and I got thirsty, and still the mountain was a long ways off. I knowed if I kept going I'd get there; so I kept going, but I sure didn't like to think about how far I was getting from that old cedar water bucket on the front gallery. And Mama's kitchen table. A chunk of corn

bread crumbled into a glass of sweet milk would sure taste good right now.

The trail dust got so hot that I had to pick grass-shaded spots to step in or run fast where there wasn't any and it was 'way past dinnertime when I finally come to the last long slant that led up to the foot of the mountain.

I stopped and looked up to the top of it and forgot how wore out and thirsty I was. I could feel my heart kicking hard against my ribs. Maybe it wasn't much of a mountain. Maybe it was nearer just being a hill. But it looked like a terrible big mountain to me. It was taller even than the cottonwood growing beside the pond at home. And I'd never seen anything before as tall as that old cottonwood.

Big old spread-topped live oaks ringed the foot of the mountain and leaned against it, like they was tired, and up out of the middle of this ring reared the ragged slopes, getting steeper and steeper till they were finally capped off by a solid layer of limestone rock thicker than I was tall.

Here and there big slabs of cap rock had broke off and tumbled part way down the slopes, where they'd lodged and made traps for dirt that scrub brush and wild flowers could grow in. There was sweet williams and bluebonnets and pale pink primroses, all blooming together. And where a bunch of tall grass had got a foothold it grew higher there than out on the prairies.

It was a wild and shaggy-looking place, but big and grand and pretty, too, so that, going up to it, I had the sort of quiet, scared feeling I get sometimes going into a big church.

I left the hot sun and went into a scooped-out place under the trees where the twisted limbs of the live oaks made a solid arched roof over a shallow pool of seep-spring water. I felt the shade laying cool on me and lifted off my sweaty hat—and then scare-jumped ten feet to one side at a sudden booming roar and the threshing of low tree limbs.

A big shadowy thing whipped through a thicket of blooming buckeye and another shot directly over my head, so low that I had to duck, and both of them were gone before it came to me that I'd jumped a couple of wild turkey hens.

They'd nearly scared me out of my britches, them old turkey hens had, and I sure felt silly for a little bit, trying to get my breath back and thinking how jumpy I'd been. Then I heard the leaves rustling and some low, faint cheepings and hurried around the pool to investigate. But I wasn't quick enough. Already them little old baby turkeys had melted out of sight under bits of tree bark and dry leaves and wisps of grass.

I wanted to look for them. I'd held baby chickens and baby quail and I'd love to catch one of them little old bitty turkeys and feel the warm softness of him in my hands. But I turned and went back to the pool. If I got to poking around here now, I knowed what'd happen—I'd tromple one of the little old boogers and kill it.

I bellied down at the pool and got me a long drink and washed my face, then sat on the bank and worked my hot feet down into the coolness of the red mud at the bottom. I told myself that I wouldn't stay long. I'd get up and move on pretty quick and give them old turkey hens a chance to come back and collect their broods.

But this was such a hidden, secrety sort of place that I hated to leave. I never had before felt so all by myself and still not lonesome either. I stayed a long time, making like I was the only person that'd ever been here, that nobody but me and the wild things knew about this place.

When I finally left the shade and stood right at the foot of the tall ragged slopes lifting almost straight up to the cap rock above, I got that churchy feeling again. It made me about half scared to climb up, and yet crazy wild to stand on top and see what it was like. I waited till my heart quit thumping so

hard, then caught hold of the butt of a wild persimmon bush and started climbing.

It wasn't such a hard climb. I stuck with a backbone ridge and there was always a bush or a rock or a clump of tall grass for hand and toe holds. But where I reached the cap rock it was overhanging a little and I had to circle it a piece to find a break I could climb through. The slope was steeper there and my feet started little landslides of crumbling dirt and loose rocks. They slid and rattled down through the brush and got bigger and louder as they went, and once one of the big rock slabs just needed my weight on it to start it slipping.

I felt it give under me and jumped and grabbed a scrub cedar and held on for life while that big boulder picked up speed and went crashing and pitching end over end toward the bottom, where it snapped off big live-oak saplings before it slammed to a stop against a tree with a trunk the size of a sugar barrel.

That was sure a close one and I had to sit there, holding to the cedar bush a long time before I could rake up the nerve to climb up through the break I'd picked out in the cap rock.

Then I was on top at last, and one look at how high I was and how big the world was around me took my breath away and made me want to grab something and hold to it to steady myself.

I heard a slithering sound on the rock underfoot and turned to look. It was a mountain boomer lizard. I'd scared him and he was sure hotfooting it for a crack in the edge of the cap rock behind me. He slid to a stop right at the edge of the crack and lay there with his long tail curled and waving and the bright orange and green of his new spring coat shining against the gray of the stone. He studied me for a minute, didn't like my looks, and darted over the edge, clinking a loose stone as he went.

That's how I found the spear point. It lay right at the edge of the crack and that old mountain boomer had come within a hair of knocking it off into that crack with him.

I went to pick it up, half scared to believe my eyes. But that's what it was, a real flint spear point that a real wild Indian had brought and lost on the mountain at some time too long back to think about. It was long as my hand, liver-colored, with chipped edges sharp as ever, and polished glass-smooth all over.

I held it and looked at it and rubbed its smooth sides between my hands. Here for once was something that was all mine, a finer thing than I'd ever hoped to own. It wasn't an old empty medicine bottle or a broken-bladed pocket knife or a short length of frazzled rope—stuff that grown people can't use any more and turn over to kids for playthings. It wasn't even a toy like you get for Christmas and get to wind up a few times before the spring breaks and it won't work again.

This was a thing that would last forever and no man living now had ever seen it. For no telling how many hundred years it had been laying right up here on the edge of the cap rock, waiting for the time when I'd get born and come and find it. Up here on the mountain I'd found a treasure!

I stood and held my spear point and looked across the grassy prairies, reaching out to the sky line. Away to the south, toward home, a cloud broke, spilling out a lacy blue curtain of rain. Closer, a little two-bit cyclone dropped out of the air and exploded the prairie dust like a stick of dynamite under a mesquite stump. It whirled away, spouting skyward a mile-high column of brown dust and prairie litter. And all around, the heat waves shimmered and danced.

I stood and watched and a big aching hurt came and kept swelling inside me till it finally burst and I was as lightheaded and giddy as the time one of the Macy cow hands brought Papa a jug of agerita-berry wine and I sneaked it out to the

barn and tasted too long. For a time there, I wasn't a ten-year-old farm boy with two-colored hair and a trail of freckles across my nose. I was a bold, proud Indian warrior with painted head feathers and gripping a long spear with a point of liver-colored flint.

It was long after dark when I got home, and I'd never have found it if it hadn't been for the yellow lamplight shining out of the cabin window. I was so hungry I was cramping and so tired I could have dropped down and slept in my tracks. I went past the cow lot and stopped at the front-yard gate when I heard Papa outside in the dark.

"He'll be all right, Mag," I heard him tell Mama. "He'll be all right. We'll find him. I'll ride over and get the Macy hands to help."

I heard the slap of leather and the stamp of a hoof and knowed Papa was saddling up a horse. Mama come and stood in the lighted doorway and I could see that she'd been crying.

"I know, Jess," she said. "He'll be all right."

But the way she said it made me think of the time when the hoppers got the crop and Papa'd gone out and tried for a job to buy winter rations with and hadn't got it and Mama'd said, "We'll make out all right, Jess!" Even when she knowed we couldn't unless something turned up.

That give me a cold, jumpy feeling in my stomach. I hadn't thought of this. I hadn't aimed to scare them. I'd figured on a whipping for running off, but I sure hadn't bargained on scaring them.

I stepped into a patch of lamplight in the yard and said, "Here I am, Papa."

I tried to say it like I'd just been out to the cow lot and back, but it didn't sound that way. I heard Papa grunt in the dark and then here come Mama, saying, "Oh, Cotton! Oh, Cotton!" Over and over she said it, even after she'd got her hands on me

and was hurrying me inside the house. She was crying again.

Papa come and stood in the door and looked at me and his face was all red and there was a set to his jaws that I'd seen before. He slapped a pair of bridle reins against his legs and said: "Where you been, boy?"

I pulled away from Mama and wiped her tears off the back of my neck and said, "I went to the mountain."

"To the mountain!" Papa said. "You mean you run off and went all the way to that mountain by yourself?"

"Yes, sir," I said. "I couldn't hold off no longer. I just had to go!"

He stared at me and his face got redder. "You know what you got coming to you?"

"Yes, sir." I walked to the door and out into the dark yard.

Behind me I heard Mama beg, "Oh, Jess!"

"Confound hit, Mag, you know I've got hit to do!" Papa said, and come out and got hold of my shirt collar and went to work on me with the bridle reins.

It was sure bad. It was worse even than I'd thought it would be. But I did my best not to jump and holler and twist around, like I usually did, because I knew I had this one coming. I gripped my spear point tight and did my best to think of the trip to the mountain instead of the stinging lash of those bridle reins.

After a while it was over and I sure felt better. It's a mighty heavy load on a body, waiting to take a whipping they know is coming.

I felt a lot better when we went into the house. I was paid off now. The price had been high, but that trip to the mountain had been worth a dozen whippings.

Then I looked up at Mama and didn't feel so good. She was sitting in a chair back of the kitchen table now, with her eyes red and raw from crying and her pretty mouth all twisted up

and pulled out of shape. There was a sort of lost, hurt look in her eyes, too, that I'd never seen there before.

I sat down to the cold supper she had laid out for me. But I couldn't eat a bite. I'd been mighty hungry when I came in, but now that look in Mama's eyes took my appetite.

I couldn't understand it. I'd taken my whipping; everything ought to be all right now. Why did Mama keep looking at me that way?

While I piddled with my biscuits and bacon and syrup, it come to me gradually what was the matter. Mama had been scared sick—so scared about me that she couldn't get over it!

I hadn't bargained for that. I hadn't once thought what I might be doing to Mama. It looked like I was a long way from being paid off yet.

When I finally thought of it my stomach balled up into a hard knot. But I was still willing—if it'd make things right with Mama.

I got up and took my spear point out of my pocket. I laid it on the table in front of her. "Here, Mama," I said. "Here's something I brought you from the mountain."

Mama glanced at it and then away, as if it didn't amount to a thing. That look stayed in her eyes.

I couldn't believe it. I'd given her the finest thing I'd ever had, and it still wasn't enough!

Suddenly she put her head down on her arms and went to crying. "It's all right, Son," she said. "I'm just crying for—well, I guess it's for the baby I've lost. Seems like you just went and growed up before it come to my notice."

I tried to figure it all out that night while I lay in the dark on my corn-shuck mattress. But I never did. I couldn't see why Mama was so hurt about everything. I sure hadn't meant to hurt her. It was just that—well, when the high lonesome places get to calling, seems like a body's nearly got to go.





